

TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 1761 05522615 3



The  
Theological Collection  
of the  
**JOHN W. GRAHAM**  
**LIBRARY**  
—  
Toronto







THE FUNDAMENTALS  
OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

---

THE WARFARE OF  
THE SOUL : Practical  
Studies in the Life of  
Temptation.

Crown 8vo.

LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.

---

THE PASSION OF THE KING :  
DAILY MEDITATIONS FOR LENT.

THE VOICE OF MY PRAYER :  
MEDITATIONS FOR SUNDAYS AND  
FEASTS.

YOUNG CHURCHMAN CO.  
Milwaukee, Wis.

# THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE

BY

SHIRLEY CARTER HUGHSON

*Priest of the Order of the Holy Cross and Chaplain-General  
of the Community of St. Mary, Peekskill, New York  
Author of "The Warfare of the Soul," etc.*

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.  
FOURTH AVENUE AND 30TH STREET, NEW YORK  
LONDON, BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS

1915

71.85  
HUG

42366

APR 9 1945



## PREFACE

AFTER three hundred years' suppression, the Religious Life in the Anglican Communion was revived now nearly three-quarters of a century ago. During this period it has produced, in one form or another, a wealth of literature, most of it being of a devotional character. Although the principles of the Life have been assiduously studied by men and women of learning and ability, no book has yet been written which can be freely put as a text-book into the hands of aspirants and others desiring to know what are the technical principles of the Religious State.

It is with no little hesitation that the present author offers this book to his Religious and clerical brethren. A work of this kind should be prepared by one of leisure and learning, not by a busy mission priest who has had neither time nor freedom to acquire the scholarship that should be brought to bear upon such a subject.

Two facts, however, would seem to give some ground for boldness. First, the book is not written to order. Whatever it may be worth, it is the mature product of over sixteen years of practical work amongst practical Religious. The greater part of the



book was prepared before the idea of printing it was suggested, and the materials were gathered and digested for actual use in giving courses of instruction, retreats, etc., to Religious.

In the second place, and what is more to the point, there is not a statement or opinion in the book that is original. Everything is drawn from writers of whose standing there can be no question. The work of the author has been that of gathering, sifting, digesting, and arranging. Free use has been made of footnotes, and the absence of the mention of authorities for any statement or conclusion indicates a consensus of the best theologians on the point involved. The pages may seem at times to be overburdened with quotations, but, in a text-book, it is better to err on the side of giving the *ipsissima verba* of the masters than to risk presenting general statements that may fail to give accurately the consensus of opinion.

The question may be asked why so many references have been made to Roman Catholic authorities. In reply I would say that with Roman legislation or official opinion, as such, we have nothing to do. They are not of authority for Anglicans. But when Roman legislation, however modern it may be, is the expression of the experience of many centuries of the uninterrupted practical working-out of problems and principles, it would be yielding to the narrowest prejudice to reject it. In the present work I have not hesitated, at any point, to make use of the experience of the Religious Life in the Roman Church, or to recommend it heartily as the best model for us to follow. Because we do not agree with Rome in

certain theological and devotional matters is no reason why we should reject the results of the experience she has had in the identical work we are seeking to do. The fact that the Church of England repudiated the Roman authority, or that Pius V undertook to declare excommunicate those who adhered to her principles, does not make the practical experience of teachers and pastors of the Latin obedience less valuable to us than it would have been had these events never occurred. It would be a confession of weakness that I am not prepared to make for us to be afraid to acknowledge our debt to devout Roman authors of late centuries.

Nor are we in this matter better than our fathers. "The restorers of the Religious Life amongst us," says a recent writer, "avowedly turned to Roman models for examples as to rule, habit, and devotions. These borrowings were not made crudely or unintelligently : there was a great deal of adaptation, modification and omission, but, still, the source of the borrowings was consciously Roman."<sup>1</sup> What was good enough for Dr. Pusey, for John Mason Neale, for Father Benson, Upton Richards, Butler of Wantage, for Carter of Clewer, and other great founders in the Anglican Church, the present writer has not the rashness to reject.

It must not, however, be thought that we must look to continental sources alone for instruction in the principles and practices of Religion. The English Church, before the upheaval of the sixteenth

<sup>1</sup> The Very Rev. Provost Ball in *The English Church Review*, August, 1913, p. 346.

century, had worked out for herself the best methods of monastic living, and set her approval upon them by formal legislation.

The impression is common, and is to be found even amongst Religious, that the customs and discipline of monastic Communities grew up within the Communities themselves, spreading from house to house, being enforced prescriptively as they were found fitting and conducive to good Religious discipline.

This is partly true, but it is also a fact, generally lost sight of, that many of the principles and customs of Religion are formal laws of the Church, enacted by English synods and councils, and stand to-day unrepealed. In England previous to the Reformation, Religious Orders were the constant subject of definite legislation. One has only to refer to any work on English canon or civil law to see how much of such legislation there was, and how definitely the monastic houses were under formal law.

For example, canons of provincial or national councils, or legal episcopal decrees, settled from time to time such varied questions as the appointment of confessors for Religious houses;<sup>1</sup> the reading and study of monks;<sup>2</sup> the qualifications and duties of priors and minor officials;<sup>3</sup> the term of their office and causes for removal;<sup>4</sup> the age for entering

<sup>1</sup> Council Westmin., A.D. 1102, Can. 18. The references to the early English Councils, unless otherwise stated, are taken from Johnson's *English Canons*, in "The Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology."

<sup>2</sup> Council Cloveshoo, A.D. 747, Can. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Council London, A.D. 1126, Can. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Council Westmin., A.D. 1200, Can. 15.

Religion;<sup>1</sup> the length of the novitiate;<sup>2</sup> age of profession;<sup>3</sup> questions involving dowry;<sup>4</sup> form and ritual of profession;<sup>5</sup> the monk's obligation to the particular house that professes him;<sup>6</sup> regulation of the business duties a monk may perform;<sup>7</sup> privileges for sick monks;<sup>8</sup> diet and dress of religious;<sup>9</sup> hours of meals;<sup>10</sup> the scope and extent of obedience;<sup>11</sup> the silence to be observed;<sup>12</sup> the question of acting as god-parents;<sup>13</sup> length of stay allowable at houses of parents and friends;<sup>14</sup> frequency and conditions of Communion;<sup>15</sup> etc.

All these and numberless other principles and details were subjects of formal legislation in the English Church, and by such legislation the general principles of the life were slowly wrought out under the sanction of ecclesiastical authority.

It would be impossible to make acknowledgment

<sup>1</sup> Theodori Poenit., in Haddon and Stubbs, III, 201.

<sup>2</sup> Council Cloveshoo, A.D. 747, Can. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Const. 41 Langton, A.D. 1222.

<sup>4</sup> Council Westmin., A.D. 1127, Can. 3; Council London, A.D. 1175, Can. 8; Council Westmin., A.D. 1200, Can. 15; Const. 39 Langton, A.D. 1222.

<sup>5</sup> Theodori Poenitentiale, in Haddon and Stubbs, III, 192. Council Cloveshoo, A.D. 747, Can. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Council Hertford, A.D. 673, Can. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Const. 15 Boniface, A.D. 1261; 20 Peckham, A.D. 1281; 7 Stratford, A.D. 1343.

<sup>8</sup> Const. 44 Langton, A.D. 1222.

<sup>9</sup> Council Cealchythe, A.D. 785, Can. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Council Cloveshoo, A.D. 747, Can. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Council Hertford, A.D. 673, Can. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Const. 43 Langton, A.D. 1222.

<sup>13</sup> Council Westmin., A.D. 1102, Can. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Const. 18 Peckham, A.D. 1281.

<sup>15</sup> Cap. 45 Theodulf, A.D. 994.



here to the many friends who have helped the author in this work. To the Rev. F. W. Puller, S.S.J.E., I am indebted for permission to reprint in the appendix his paper on the relation of Religious to their Bishops, and also for leave to use a valuable privately printed letter on the subject of vows. To the Rev. Erskine Wright, B.D., I owe much for the able and patient criticism by which I have profited at every step. The Rev. T. Bingham, M.A., has kindly given valuable help in revising the proofs; and I am indebted to several members of the Community of St. Mary for much labour expended on the important task of verifying references, making translations, and transcribing the manuscript for the printer.

S. C. H.

ST. MICHAEL'S MONASTERY, SEWANEE,

*Feast of St. Scholastica, 1914.*



# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

### THE THEORY OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

	PAGE
I Of Union with God through Charity as the Chief End of Man - - - -	1
II Of Precepts and Counsels- - - -	4
III Of the Nature of the Religious State - -	7
IV Of the State of Perfection as of Divine Institution - - - - -	11

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRACTICE OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

I Of the Religious Life as a State of Acquiring Perfection - - - -	14
II Of the Religious Life as tending to Re- move Impediments to Charity - -	19
III Of the Method of Tending towards Per- fection - - - - -	22
IV Of the Obligations of the State of Perfection	24

## CHAPTER III

## THE VOWS OF RELIGION

	PAGE
I Of the Nature of Vows - - -	29
II Of the Matter of a Vow - - -	33
III Of the History of Vows - - -	34
IV Of the Irrevocability of Vows - - -	37
V Of Divers Kinds of Vows - - -	42
VI Of the Obligation of Vows - - -	45
VII Of the Termination of Vows - - -	47
VIII Of an Expelled Religious - - -	55

## CHAPTER IV

## HINDRANCES TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

I Of Hindrances Invalidating Entrance into Religion - - -	58
II Of Hindrances Rendering Religion Inexpedient - - -	61
III Of the Obligation of Children to Parents -	61
IV Of Opposition of Parents to Vocation -	64
V Of the Obligation of Parents to Children -	67
VI Of the Obligation of Debts - - -	68
VII Of the Impediment of Crime - - -	70

## CHAPTER V

## ENTRANCE INTO RELIGION

I Of the Signs of Vocation - - -	72
II Of the Motives of Vocation - - -	77
III Of Responding to Religious Vocation -	81
IV Of the Duty of Superiors Regarding Religious Aspirants - - -	84
V Of Inducing Others to Enter Religion -	87

CHAPTER VI

THE NOVITIATE

	PAGE
I Of the Purpose of the Novitiate - -	90
II Of the Period of Probation - -	90
III Of Entrance upon Probation - -	93
IV Of the Obligations of the Novitiate - -	95
V Of the Continuity of the Novitiate - -	97
VI Of the Signs of the Good Novice - -	99
VII Of the Spirit of the Good Novice - -	101
VIII Of the Spirit of the Bad Novice - -	104
IX Of the "Fervor Novitius" - -	106
X Of the Dismissal of Novices - -	108
XI Of the Master of Novices - -	110
XII Of the Qualities of the Master of Novices -	115
XIII Of Election to Profession - -	117
XIV Of the Dowry - - - -	118

CHAPTER VII

RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

I Of the Substance of Profession - -	122
II Of the Validity of Profession - -	125
III Of Tacit Profession - - - -	131
IV Of the Effects of Profession - -	132
V Of the Binding Force of Profession - -	135

CHAPTER VIII

RELIGIOUS POVERTY

I Of the Vow of Poverty, Its Principle and Application - - - -	137
II Of Ownership and Permissions - -	142
III Of Permission Express, Tacit, or Presumed	144
IV Of the Justice of Permissions - -	146

	PAGE
V Of the Validity of Permissions - - -	147
VI Of Violation of Poverty by Acquiring Goods - - - - -	148
VII Of Violation of Poverty by Alienating Goods - - - - -	152
VIII Of the Virtue of Poverty - - -	155
IX Of Offences against the Virtue of Poverty	160
X Of the Difference between the Vow and the Virtue of Poverty - - - - -	162
XI Of the Peculium - - - - -	164

## CHAPTER IX

## RELIGIOUS CHASTITY

I Of the Vow of Chastity - - -	167
II Of the Virtue of Chastity - - -	173
III Of the Difference between the Vow and the Virtue of Chastity - - - - -	174
IV Of Sins against Religious Chastity - -	175
V Of Particular Friendships - - -	183
VI Of Temptations against Chastity - -	186
VII Of Religious Enclosure - - -	187

## CHAPTER X

## RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE

I Of the Principle of Obedience - - -	194
II Of the Nature and Excellence of Religious Obedience - - - - -	197
III Of the Vow of Obedience - - -	200
IV Of the Matter of Religious Obedience - -	201
V Of Superiors, and their Duty of Enforcing Obedience - - - - -	202
VI Of the Relation of Conscience to Religious Obedience - - - - -	206
VII Of Obedience to Chapter - - -	207

# CONTENTS

xv

	PAGE
VIII Of the Virtue of Obedience - -	- 208
IX Of the First Degree of Obedience - -	- 211
X Of the Second Degree of Obedience - -	- 213
XI Of the Third Degree of Obedience - -	- 216
XII Of Blind Obedience - - - -	- 219
XIII Of Blind Obedience as an Act of Reason -	- 222

## CHAPTER XI

### RELIGIOUS RULE

I Of the Significance of Rule - -	- 225
II Of the Obligation of Rule - -	- 226
III Of Violation of Rule through Contempt -	- 229
IV Of the Signs of Contempt of Rule -	- 233
V Of Dispensation from Rule - -	- 235
VI Of Reverence for Rule - - -	- 237
VII Of Rule as a Protection to the Precepts -	- 238
VIII Of the Spirit of Strict Observance -	- 239

## CHAPTER XII

### RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS

I Of Religious Superiors in General - -	- 242
II Of the Qualities of a Superior - -	- 243
III Of the Right Mingling of Mildness and Strength in Religious Government -	- 246
IV Of the Duty of Superiors to Subjects -	- 253
V Of the Responsibilities of Superiors as Interpreted by the Fathers - -	- 257

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DIVINE OFFICE

I Of the Antiquity of the Divine Office -	- 259
II Of the Principle of the Divine Office -	- 260
III Of the Perfect Office - - -	- 263



	PAGE
IV Of the Obligation of the Divine Office	- 267
V Of Questions Concerning the Divine Office	272

## CHAPTER XIV

## MONASTIC OBSERVANCES

I Of Religious Silence - - - -	- 276
II Of Religious Recreation - - - -	- 280
III Of the Refectory - - - -	- 282
IV Of the Chapter of Faults - - - -	- 288

## CHAPTER XV

## THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

I Of Differentiations in the Religious State -	292
II Of Varieties of Religion as Ordained by the Holy Spirit - - - -	- 295
III Of the Essence Common to the Various Forms of Religion - - - -	- 296
IV Of the Contemplative Life - - - -	- 298
V Of the " Four Steps of the Cloister Stair "	303
VI Of the Active Life - - - -	- 305
VII Of the Mixed Life - - - -	- 308
VIII Of the Comparative Excellence of Various Forms of Religion - - - -	- 309

## APPENDIX I

## THE RELATION OF RELIGIOUS TO THEIR BISHOPS.

By the Rev. F. W. Puller, S.S.J.E. - - -	- 313
--	-------

## APPENDIX II

THE AMERICAN CANON CONCERNING RELIGIOUS ORDERS - - - - -	- 324
---	-------

# THE FUNDAMENTALS OF THE RELIGIOUS STATE

## CHAPTER I

### THE THEORY OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

#### I. *Of Union with God through Charity as the Chief End of Man*

A THING is said to be perfect when it attains perfectly the end for which it was designed. The final purpose of the human soul is union with God, and the soul is nearer to or further away from perfection according as it is more or less united to Him.

The means of union with God is charity, of which all other virtues are but phases and aspects, as St. Augustine teaches: "All our good works are the one operation of charity."<sup>1</sup> So every exercise of

<sup>1</sup> St. Aug., *In Psal.* lxxxix., Migne, *P. L.* Tom. xxxvii, col. 1148. See also St. Aug. *De Moribus Ecclesiae*, Lib. i, cap. xv, Migne, *P. L.* Tom. xxxii, col. 1322. So also St. Gregory: "As the many branches of a tree proceed from the one root so the many virtues spring from the one charity."—St. Greg. Mag., *Hom. in Evang.*, Lib. ii, 27, Migne, *P. L.* Tom. lxxvi, col. 1205.

virtue, of whatever kind or degree, is an advance in charity, and every advance in charity is a further perfecting of union with God, which is our final end.

The other Christian virtues are, therefore, the instruments that charity develops and uses to entrench itself more surely in the soul in order to win it to perfect union with God. Charity possesses itself of the will, and by working through the will becomes the initial motive power that lies behind every exercise of the virtues, giving them both their worth and their stability.

The more strongly charity possesses the soul, the more promptly, easily and sweetly is the will, as its servant, able to proceed to the exercise of the particular virtue required.

For example, he who loves God will find comparatively little difficulty in putting his *faith* in Him Whom he loves ; he will be strong in a *hope* based on the promises God has made him, " nothing wavering " ; he will be able to perform definite *acts of love* for Him Whom he loves ; when he offends the Beloved, *penitence* will spring up unbidden ; and *patience*, *meekness*, and *humility* will mark the attitude with which he meets the dealings of divine Providence. Thus does love become the motive force that operates all life.

Since, then, charity is the power by means of which we are united to God, the more perfect our charity, the more perfect that union. The whole end and aim of the Christian life, therefore, is to increase and perfect charity. Everything that operates against this increase is, in some sense, sin, in that it retards the

soul in its progress towards its proper end. For anything whatever that causes the soul to deviate in any degree from its aim Godward is of the nature of sin.<sup>1</sup>

So far as salvation is concerned, even the least degree of charity is sufficient. The avoidance of mortal sin is sufficient to keep one in the state of charity necessary to salvation. God is not content, however, that His people should barely find their way into His Kingdom, and be able barely to maintain themselves in His favour. A king does not count himself as honoured whose subjects maintain only that measure of loyalty that prevents their falling into the crime of treason. He desires the whole-hearted, passionate loyalty of his people. Likewise, God is not content that His people should merely maintain their union with Him. He desires a love and devotion over and above this, and He inspires the souls of men accordingly.

Men have been called to use many means to increase in their souls that charity, the operation of which brings union with God ; but the most perfect and all-embracing means lies in not only showing a loyal and loving obedience by doing God's expressed *will* in keeping His precepts, but also by keeping His counsels, *i.e.*, doing everything that judgment and conscience may indicate as God's *wish* for us. Where judgment and conscience indicate it to be God's wish for one to accept the three Evangelical Counsels of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, which we discuss below, he is then called to what is known

<sup>1</sup> "Ratio peccati constitit in deviationem ab ordine ad finem."—St. Thomas, *Summa*. I. 2, Q. 21, Art. 1 ad 3.

as the *Life of the Counsels*, which is the highest condition of perfection under which one can live in this world.

Now he who has the highest call to the Life of the Counsels will desire to give to it a quality of moral permanence. This quality is created by a vow to continue it to the end.

By taking such a vow to live the Life of the Counsels, one enters upon such a permanent condition as to constitute the *Religious State*, or the *State of Perfection* or of tending to perfection.

## II. *Of Precepts and Counsels*

It is necessary at this point to mark clearly the difference between precept and counsel.

The distinction is one set forth by our Lord Himself, and has been interpreted for us by the tradition of the Church in all ages.

Two characteristics are necessary to constitute a counsel, as distinguished from a precept :

1. It should be a good work that is not prescribed under pain even of venial sin.

2. It should not only be good in itself, but it should be better than some other good work which one is free to choose as an alternative.

Counsels fall into two divisions—*general* and *particular*.

A *general* counsel is one which is not given for its own sake, but for the sake of the good that will arise from it in the practice of the virtues in general, and so lead on to a greater perfection of charity.



A *particular* counsel is one that is given for the sake of the immediate good that will arise out of the particular thing counselled.

The *general* counsels are three in number—those of *poverty*, *chastity*, and *obedience*.

These counsels are a universal aid in the exercise of all the virtues. Perfection does not lie in the exercise of these counsels except instrumentally and secondarily,<sup>1</sup> but they are of primary importance because they free the soul, as nothing else can do, from the solicitude and anxieties which make it often difficult to keep from sin, and which prevent a man from giving himself wholly to God. They are, therefore, regarded as the Counsels *par excellence*, and are commonly known as the Evangelical Counsels, or the Counsels of Perfection.

In these counsels may be comprehended a fourth, namely, that of confirming these three, or any one of them, by a vow.

As intimated above, we may distinguish two actions in the divine will. One we may call *absolute*, as when one says, “*I will.*” The other may be called *relative*, as when he says, “*I would.*”<sup>2</sup>

The former action of the will of God creates a precept. The latter “indicates simply a dictate of the divine intelligence, judging and approving something as better adapted for the obtaining of eternal life, or as adapted for the more easily and the more

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 184, Art. 3.

<sup>2</sup> See Humphrey, *Elements of Religious Life*, p. 13 (2nd Ed., London, 1903). It is necessary to guard the use of this expression, as it would be quite untheological to affirm mere velleity of the Godhead.

perfectly obtaining of that life.”<sup>1</sup> The revelation of such an action of the divine will does not create a necessary obligation to conform oneself to it.

The Christian perfection to which all, secular and Religious alike, are called, lies essentially in attaining to charity through the observance of the precepts.<sup>2</sup> The *State of Perfection* is constituted for the keeping both of the precepts and the counsels. The counsels are adopted and observed as an aid and guarantee of the observance of the precepts. They may be compared to the outposts or surrounding fortifications, which protect the inner citadel, which cannot be seized by the enemy until the outworks have been carried. So if a man does everything that is revealed to him as merely *desired* by God, he cannot fail to attain to the observance of those things absolutely *willed* by God. The faithful following of the counsels secures the faithful observance of the precepts, which, in its turn, leads to the increase of love, in which lies the fulfilment of Christian perfection.

St. Thomas summarizes this truth admirably : “ The counsels,” he says, “ are instituted for the purpose of securing charity, which is their end ; in order that by means of them the precepts may be more easily and perfectly observed. Thus through the counsels one attains to perfect love for God and his neighbour ” ;<sup>3</sup> but “ not as though perfection consisted chiefly in the counsels themselves, but because

<sup>1</sup> Humphrey, *Elements of Religious Life*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 184, Art. 3.

“ Perfectio, non refertur ad consilia, sed ad perfectum modum observandi praecepta.”—St. Thomas, *Contra. Retr. Hom. a Relig.*, cap. vii.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, *Contra Retr. Hom. a Relig.*, cap. vii.

they are the way or the instruments by which we lay hold on the perfection of charity.”<sup>1</sup>

### III. *Of the Nature of the Religious State*

The Religious vocation, when considered in regard to its ultimate end, differs in no sense from the vocation of every baptized Christian. By virtue of Baptism, we are all placed in a state of grace, that is to say, in a morally permanent condition of union with God, from which state no change is contemplated either by God or by those who enter upon it.

All souls are called to perfection. Even before the dispensation of the Law, God, in renewing His covenant with Abraham, commanded him : “ Walk before me and be thou perfect,”<sup>2</sup> and our Lord, in laying down the principles of the Kingdom by which everyone was to be governed, said, “ Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”<sup>3</sup>

Every soul is bound in the end to become perfect in its finite nature even as God is perfect in His infinite nature, and life on earth, if it be true to the baptismal obligation, will be lived by all souls in the constant endeavour to increase by the help of the Holy Ghost in this perfection.

The Religious differs from the so-called secular Christian only in that he is called of God to use a perfect method of keeping the precepts in order to attain the perfection that is the common vocation.<sup>4</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Contra Retr. Hom. a Relig.*, cap. vi.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis xvii. 1.    <sup>3</sup> St. Matthew v. 48.

<sup>4</sup> “ Ad perfectum modum observandi praecepta.”—St. Thomas, *Contra Retr. Hom. a Relig.*, cap. vii.

accepting his particular vocation he binds himself to use certain means which are not universally binding, and which become of obligation to him only because in response to a special call he has made a vow to God to that effect, which vow is of force so long as he shall live.

The Religious State, or State of Perfection, is therefore one that exists within the state of grace common to all baptized souls, and is a higher condition than that to which all souls are bound. It is defined as *a State of Life, approved by the Church, tending towards the perfection of charity by means of a Rule observed under the perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.*

In order to understand what is meant by the word *State*, used in this sense, we must consider its etymology. It is derived from *stare*, to stand, hence *to be permanent*. Therefore, when we use the word *State* in its true sense, we mean a *morally permanent condition of life*. This permanence is not said to be absolute. There can be change, but such change is not contemplated. The cause that produces a *State* must be a *morally permanent* one.

Without binding oneself by a vow, there could be in Religion no permanent condition or *State* of tending towards perfection, since without it one would be free at any time to return to the condition of ordinary Christian living, limiting himself to the observance of the precepts only.<sup>1</sup>

Just as the moral permanence of the state of grace

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *Traité de l'Etat Religieux*, Vol. i, p. 129 (Paris Ed. of 1872).



is essential to its existence, so we find that moral permanence is essential to the state known as the Religious Life. One may live after the manner of Religious, and that in quite a perfect degree, yet he would be in no proper sense a Religious unless he had bound himself permanently.

In short, Religion finds its substance not only in a certain method of serving God, but in such a consecration of oneself to God as to constitute moral stability in the method.

The fulness and irrevocability of the obligation assumed by a Religious is implied in the meaning of *vow*. One form of the word from which it is derived (*devoveo*) implies dedication unto death to a deity. The victim to be slain was said to be *devoted*, i.e., offered in death in the fulfilment of a vow, and on being so vowed it became *res sacra*, a sacred thing, and to withdraw it in any degree from the purpose to which it was vowed was *rei sacrae violatio*,<sup>1</sup> the violation of a sacred thing, that is to say, sacrilege.

The Religious is a victim dedicated to God. Under a vow he devotes himself to Him as a holocaust, a whole burnt offering, so that any holding back from paying that which we have vowed is akin to the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, who after they had voluntarily dedicated certain possessions to God "kept back part of the price."<sup>2</sup>

Doyle tells us that the obligation of poverty, chastity, and obedience "is, as it were, the specifying quality or virtue which makes the Religious a Religious, and not a secular. In order to confirm this

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 99, Art. 1.    <sup>2</sup> Acts v. 2.



difference of state, and make it lasting (*i.e.*, make it a *state*), he prevents himself from ever withdrawing from his renunciation by taking a *vow*. By that act (*i.e.*, of taking the *vow*) he is said, and truly said, to be in a *state of perfection*, because, while other men attain to perfection—when they *do* attain to it—not by the nature of their state, but by their own efforts in making the best of that state, which is of itself indifferent, the Religious lives in a *state* of life, or in a fixed and stable *way* of life, which, of its own nature, tends to perfection ; and it has this tendency because of its own nature it is stripped of self and of creatures which are the obstacles to perfection or to charity. It does not, however, by any means follow from this that a given Religious is more perfect than a given secular, but that the state of life pursued by a Religious *ought to lead him to perfection*, whereas that of a secular, being at best indifferent, either may or may not do so.”<sup>1</sup>

This author has, of course, no reference here to the general state of grace of the baptized, which, if persevered in, will lead inevitably to perfection. In comparing the Religious and the secular he refers to the secular who is engaged in some ordinary vocation which, in a certain sense, may be called a state ; *e.g.*, the state of being a lawyer, a merchant, a farmer. These occupations or states are said to be indifferent, since of their own nature they do not tend to perfection, although one by “making the best of that state,” may and can find it a definite means of reaching perfection.

<sup>1</sup> Doyle, *Principles of Religious Life*, pp. 9, 10.

## THEORY OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE 11

### IV. *Of the State of Perfection as of Divine Institution*

The State of Perfection, as differentiated from the ordinary state of grace, was instituted by our Lord Himself; and three of the Evangelists, St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke, give detailed accounts of the occasion. The fullest of these accounts is the narrative we find in the nineteenth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel.

Here we are told of one who came to our Lord, saying, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Our Lord replied, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," and proceeded to detail the things that were of imperative precept. The young man answered, "All these things have I kept from my youth up; what lack I yet?" He was able to say that he had observed the precepts of God all his life, but in the presence of our Lord he felt within that there was yet something lacking, something more to be done than the mere keeping the commandments, some higher spiritual ideal to be sought than merely entering into life, infinitely rich and precious a thing as that was. Nor did the instinct of the young man's heart deceive him. Our Lord, in response to his question, immediately made the differentiation for him. Thou hast kept the commandments, He says, in substance, thou hast done all that is necessary to entering into eternal life, but this is indeed not enough for thee; "One thing thou lackest."<sup>1</sup> "*If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell*

<sup>1</sup> See St. Mark x. 21.

that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven ; and come and follow Me.”<sup>1</sup>

Here our Lord plainly speaks of two conditions of the life of Christian grace ; one in which the precepts are observed and which admits to eternal life ; the other in which one is seeking to “ be perfect,” in short, the State of Perfection, in which one goes beyond the precepts and lives the Life of the Counsels.

Our Lord makes it plain, also, that this great work is not laid upon anyone as a matter of obligation. His words to the young man are clear : “ If *thou* wilt to be perfect.” He says nothing concerning His own will. That found expression in the words : “ Keep the commandments.” All else must be for those who are able to receive it, and they themselves must decide. As our Lord said, “ He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.”<sup>2</sup>

St. Jerome, commenting on this incident, observes, “ Great enterprises are always left to the free choice of those who hear of them. . . . There is no compulsion laid upon you. If you are to win the prize, it must be by the exercise of your own free will.”<sup>3</sup>

The glory of the Life of the Counsels is that it is a free offering of the soul to God. He does not require it, but constrained by love, men yield their all to Him in glad and generous surrender.

Nor does our Lord leave us in doubt as to what the essentials of this life of perfection are. On the same occasion, He definitely tells His disciples that the

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xix. 21.    <sup>2</sup> St. Matthew xix. 12.

<sup>3</sup> St. Jerome, *Epis.* lxvi, *Ad Pammachium*. Migne, *P. L.* Tom. xxii, col. 643.

State of Perfection consists in following Him in the permanent condition of poverty, chastity and obedience.

When the young man went away sorrowful, unable to rise up to the high and extraordinary vocation that our Lord had offered him, in reply to their questions He says to His disciples: "Everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life."<sup>1</sup>

Here we have the divine call to the life of Holy Poverty, the forsaking of houses and lands, "for my name's sake." Here we have the call to Holy Chastity, the forsaking of the joys of home, the consolations of wife and children, "for my sake and the gospel's";<sup>2</sup> and the call to Holy Obedience, leaving the earthly obedience of father and mother, to follow Him, and this "for the Kingdom of God's sake."<sup>3</sup>

It is clear from what we have seen that not only this state of life, but the very name itself, has our Lord for its author. Therefore, the State of Perfection, as involved in the so-called Religious Life, is not of human or ecclesiastical, but of divine institution.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xix. 29.    <sup>2</sup> St. Mark x. 29.    <sup>3</sup> St. Luke xviii. 29.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRACTICE OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

#### I. *Of the Religious Life as a State of Acquiring Perfection*

THE State of Perfection or of tending to Perfection does not imply that those who have entered upon it have become perfect. Far from it. They enter upon it just because they desire Perfection. Like the young man in the Gospel who had kept the commandments from his youth, they are constantly inquiring, "What lack I yet?"<sup>1</sup> The sense of spiritual lack drives them on continually to reach after higher things.

In response to the question why a state of life that does not claim to be entirely perfect should be called the State of Perfection, St. Thomas explains that a condition embracing many things often takes its name from that which it embraces *par excellence*. So "Religion is called a State of Perfection from the intention of its end."<sup>2</sup> As "one who enters the schools does not thereby declare himself to be learned, but that he is *desirous of acquiring learning* ; . . .

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xix. 20.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 1 ad 3.



so the Religious does not violate his profession if he is not perfect, but only if he is contemptuous about tending to perfection."<sup>1</sup>

All authorities find a division of the State of Perfection into the State of Acquiring Perfection and the State of Exercising or Communicating Perfection.<sup>2</sup>

The latter pertains to the Episcopate and to those priests who have the care of training souls. These are supposed to have attained such a degree of perfection that they are able to exercise it towards those under their spiritual care, in order to lead them to a like perfection. It is assumed that, having entered the school of Christian perfection, they have now attained to such scholarship that they are able to teach others, to communicate to them what they themselves have mastered.

The State of the Religious is not, however, one of exercising Perfection, but of acquiring it. "It is," says St. Thomas, "a school, or exercise, for obtaining perfection." He therefore concludes that "He who assumes the Religious State is not required to possess perfect charity, but he is bound to this, that he tend towards and labour that he may possess it. And for the same reason he is not required actually to fulfil that which obtains the perfection of charity, but he is bound to tend to such a fulfilment."<sup>3</sup>

The word used by St. Thomas which we translate *tend* is a strong one. It does not indicate a merely passive quality of character or one that is called into action but seldom, as is implied often in our popular

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 2 ad 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 3 ad 5.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 2.

English use of it. Every meaning of the word *tendo* clearly contemplates a definite action of the will. Among its English synonyms may be mentioned *to exert oneself*, *to endeavour*, *to strive*, and the force of these meanings can be judged when we recall that from it our English adjectives *tense* and *intense* are derived. This consideration of the significance of the word shows us what St. Thomas has in mind when he describes the Religious State as one of “*tending to perfection.*”

This tendency of which the Angelical Doctor speaks *resides in the will*, and is not of any necessity connected with the feelings or affections.

Tendency is a continual active inclination to that towards which the subject is said to *tend*. For instance, a strung bow tends to spring back to its original straight position. That is to say, every fibre of the wood is alert and ready the instant the string is cut to fly back to its natural place.

So it is with the will that tends to perfection (*i.e.*, to God Himself Who is the only true and essential perfection). There may be obstacles, but let the obstacles be removed, and instantly it flies to Him.

This tendency, however, may not always *seem* to pass into action. We cannot measure our progress by appearances, and the effort to do this is a common snare to souls ignorant of the principles of the spiritual life. To attempt this is to yield to pride at many points, for it is to imply that each soul is a competent judge of the divine perfection it is seeking.

True as this may be, however, there must nevertheless be the definite and continuous effort on the

part of the soul to remove all obstacles. No man will be saved, much less make progress in this life, who does not make this effort. Mere tendency will be of no avail ; or rather we should say that though the tendency may seem to exist, if it never passes into action this is evidence that it does not exist. Mere potentiality counts for nothing in the Kingdom of God. A man is not accounted righteous because he *can be* righteous, but because he *is* righteous.

So in carrying out the great and sole business of the Religious, that of acquiring perfection, there must be a constant translation of the energy we call tendency into that energy which is a practical force for good.

We have seen a few lines back that the tendency to perfection is a tendency towards union with God Who is the only true, essential, and absolute perfection. St. Thomas says, " All things strive for God as an end by striving for good."<sup>1</sup> So he who seeks that which is revealed to him as good is seeking God, and in the pursuit of good, God will be found and His perfection will be ours through union with Him.

Herein lies the labour of which St. Thomas speaks when he says that the Religious is held, not to be perfect in this life, for that were impossible, but to " tend towards and labour in order that he may have perfect charity."<sup>2</sup> So by labouring for the right performance of those definite acts, interior or exterior, that we know to be in imitation of Christ, we tend towards Him, and so tend to our final perfection.

St. Thomas says, " Nothing is good or truly

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 1, Q. 44, Art. 4 ad 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 2.

desirable except according as it participates in the likeness of God.”<sup>1</sup> All that we do in imitation of God makes us like Him, and is an acquiring of a more advanced degree of the perfection of His Sacred Humanity, conformity to which is our end.

So, then, God is not elusive. He presents Himself and His perfection to us in concrete form, and each act of tending towards, or reaching out after the revealed good, is a step towards God, an advance in the acquirement of that perfection which we are under obligation as Religious to seek.

Rodriguez warns us : “ Do not imagine that all the work is done . . . because you are become a Religious, for it will avail you nothing to be a Religious unless you do those things for which you have entered into Religion. For you are not come thither but solely and purely . . . *to aspire continually after perfection.*”<sup>2</sup>

This is but another way of stating St. Thomas’ teaching. This is the purpose of our coming into Religion ; so let us think not so much of being perfect as of aspiring to perfection. Our part is to aspire and to labour ; God’s part is to bestow the gift. If we do our part, He will do His, and our vocation will be fulfilled.

We shall not attain to the fulness of our acquisition of perfection until we finally attain to God. Never, therefore, so long as this life lasts can we rest from our labours after perfection. When we see Him face to

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. I, Q. 44, Art. 4 ad 3.

<sup>2</sup> Rodriguez, *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection* (Duffy, Dublin), Vol. i, p. 59.



face our work will be completed, not before. Our final perfection and our eternal beatitude meet at the same point, for "Beatitude is the perfection of good."<sup>1</sup>

## II. *Of the Religious Life as Tending to Remove Impediments to Charity*

In order to get our bearings in the Religious Life and to know particularly to what we are bound to address ourselves, we must consider the special purpose of the State to which we are called.

The exercises of the Religious Life are not concerned primarily with the removal of those foes that actually *destroy* charity. These are removed in the ordinary state of grace in which all men are under obligation to live. We were supposed before we entered Religion to have rid ourselves of them, and not to have fallen under their dominion since.

"The Religious State," says St. Thomas, "is instituted chiefly to obtain perfection through certain exercises by which that which *impedes* perfect charity is taken away."<sup>2</sup>

Both the precepts and counsels, he says in another place, are appointed as means of developing charity. They apply, however, in different ways. The precepts are given for the avoidance of those things which *destroy* charity in the soul, while the counsels are appointed in order to remove everything that might *impede* the action of charity, even though not essentially contrary to it.<sup>3</sup>

He goes on to show that the Religious State has to

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. I. 2, Q. 2, Art. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 1.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 184, Art. 3.



do primarily with the removal of those things which *per se* may not only be not at all evil, but which may be good and holy, such as matrimony, but which are a hindrance to the Religious because of the special condition of life to which he has been called.

“ For the training in perfection,” says St. Thomas, “ it is necessary that one should free himself from all those things that might possibly impede him, in order that his will may wholly tend towards God, in which lies the perfection of love ” ;<sup>1</sup> or as St. Basil has it, the mind must “ keep holiday from earthly care, and devote all its energies to the acquisition of the good things which are eternal.”<sup>2</sup>

The Angelical Doctor then proceeds to show that there are three chief hindrances to the increase of charity :

1. The desire for earthly possessions.
2. The desire for the delights of the senses.
3. The irregularity of the human will.<sup>3</sup>

*First*, material possessions necessarily bind one to the life of the place where his possessions lie. In the world the possession of material things is regarded as well-nigh essential to good citizenship in a civil community. Men who have possessions have given hostages there, and their interests lie there. This is precisely what the Religious cannot do in this world. His citizenship is to be in heaven, his possessions and hostages are there, for “ where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”<sup>4</sup> The possibility of this

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 7.

<sup>2</sup> St. Basil, *Ep.* ii, 2.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 7. <sup>4</sup> St. Matthew vi. 21.

attachment to the world, and the possessions and glory of it, is removed by our vow of poverty, whereby we become morally incapable of being possessed of the material things of the world. Possession involves necessarily solicitude for the things we possess. Religious poverty does away with all such solicitude. He who professes poverty will not be tempted to decline the Spirit's leading by saying, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them."<sup>1</sup>

The *second* chief hindrance to perfection lies in the inordinate desire for the delights of the affections and the senses. Our vow of chastity tends to dispose of this desire. We must not, however, fall into the error of thinking that the affections or even the bodily senses are to be crushed. On the contrary, they are, under the operation of the virtue of chastity to which we are vowed, to be directed and disciplined, for they are to have their part in the final glorification of the body in heaven. Our Lord, since He possessed humanity in perfection and fulness, was in possession of all the bodily senses that belong essentially to man ; but His senses and bodily faculties were perfectly co-ordinated, in which condition lies the essence of chastity. In all this the Religious seeks to be like Him. Removed from the ties and anxieties of all family life, he is safe from the condemnation given to him who said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."<sup>2</sup>

The *third* main hindrance to charity is self-will, the desire for the regulation of one's own actions. All this the good Religious escapes through the operation

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xiv. 19.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

of the virtue of obedience. Again, however, we must be warned that the human will is neither to be despised nor crushed, but rather directed and brought into subjection. "I delight to do Thy will, O my God,"<sup>1</sup> was spoken of our Lord, and should be the motto of every true Religious, but we cannot will to do His will save by the operation of our wills. The operation of our wills is our only hope. We have to depend upon acts of our free will to effect, under the power and guidance of the Spirit, our salvation and sanctification.

### III. *Of the Method of Tending towards Perfection*

Perfection, which is the end towards which the Religious constantly directs his efforts, consists in a habitual disposition of the will. Every habit, whether it be good or bad, is the result of repeated acts.

Every man has within him the seed of all evil habits and vices. Every baptized soul has in it also the seed of all good habits and virtues. The bad habits, however, are not destroyed entirely by the fact that an opposite principle is infused into our souls; and virtues are not developed by the mere fact that grace is given us.

There must, on the one hand, be positive acts to destroy our evil inclinations; and, on the other, there must be positive acts to form a solid habit of virtue.

The method of tending to perfection is therefore twofold, as is taught by the Apostle when he says, "Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is

<sup>1</sup> Psalms xl. 8.

good.”<sup>1</sup> The evil habit must be undermined by steadfastly refusing to do the acts that support it ; and the opposite habit of perfection must be formed by constant definite acts that will lead to establishing it. St. Jerome writes to the monk Rusticus : “ The world’s philosophers drive out an old passion by instilling a new one ; they hammer out one nail by hammering in another. We must overcome our faults by learning to love the opposite virtues.”<sup>2</sup>

The more faithful one is in producing acts necessary for the formation of good habits, and the more perfect the manner in which one performs them, the more will one advance in the formation of virtues, and consequently in perfection.

Every good action necessarily increases some good habit, and by this very fact diminishes the disorderly disposition opposed to it. Every evil action strengthens some evil habit, and weakens the virtuous disposition opposed to it. Every deliberate action, therefore, necessarily causes us either to advance or to fall back in the way to perfection.

Thus do we see the truth of St. Augustine’s saying : “ The nourishing of charity is the weakening of cupidity ; ” and the converse is equally true, that whatever feeds cupidity weakens charity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Romans xii. 9.

<sup>2</sup> St. Jerome, *Ep. cxxv*, cap. xiv, *Ad Rusticum*. Migne, *P. L. Tom. xxii*, col. 1080.

<sup>3</sup> “ Nutrimentum ejus (*i.e.*, caritatis) est imminutio cupiditatis . . . Quisquis igitur eam nutrire vult, instet minuendis cupiditatibus.”—St. Augustine, *de Div. Quaes.*, Lib. i, Q. 36. Migne, *P. L. Tom. xl*, col. 25.



IV. *Of the Obligations of the State of Perfection*

“ It is not sufficient to make vows,” says Gautrelet, “ they must be fulfilled.” Entrance upon the State of Perfection does not always mean that one actually labours for or tends to Perfection. The fact that one has entered upon the external state of the Life of the Counsels is not enough. Through his own laxity he may fail even to keep the commandments.

Nor is it implied that no souls can be perfect save those who have entered upon the State of Perfection. One may tend to perfection and acquire it in a high degree without ever being in the State of tending to Perfection ; that is to say, without ever making profession of a fixed and stable mode of life in which he binds himself to aspire to perfection by the practice of the Counsels.

In considering the State of Perfection, we must remember that there is a *state of the way* and a *state of the end*. The Saints in glory have attained the latter. So long as we are in this world, we are in the state of the way.

Some have found it difficult to understand how a *state* and a *progress* are not, in some sense, contradictory. The best illustration of this may perhaps be found in the condition of the Saints in heaven. Their union with God is indeed a state in the sense that their condition is permanent. And yet they are in a very literal sense *in via*, for during all eternity they are progressing, going on from strength to strength, from glory to glory. St. Gregory gives us the beautiful suggestion that “ the new song ” which can be learned



only by those who are redeemed from the earth,<sup>1</sup> and which is sung by those who stand before the Lamb, is ever new because of the ever increasing knowledge and progress of those who look into the unveiled glory of God.

Since, then, we are in the State of the Way, our obligation is to make progress in that way. Not to advance in the way of virtue is to fall back.

The substance of the Religious obligation is to use everything as a means whereby one may make progress towards the Perfection which is his final goal. As St. Thomas says, one is bound always to labour for and to tend towards perfection. The secular is not so bound. He may without fault perform many actions that are indifferent in their character ; that is to say, without referring them, either implicitly or explicitly, to his final end, which is perfection.

Not so with the Religious. While his vows do not bind him under pain of sin, to the performance of every work of counsel that might increase his perfection,<sup>2</sup> yet, generally speaking, he is bound to lay hold of every possible means, either with explicit or implicit intention, either consciously or subconsciously, and to strive to use it to further his work of perfecting his soul in charity. He who wilfully and deliberately fails to do this in anything that pertains to the substance of the Religious Life is violating his obligation to make progress in the way.

The obligations of this State may be summed up as follows :—

I. The obligation to tend towards and labour for

<sup>1</sup> Revelation xiv. 3.    <sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 2.

perfection demands in the Religious a *habitual intention* by virtue of which he sets before himself perfection as the general aim of his whole life, the end to which all his actions are to be directed. Since, as has been seen, one of the chief ends of the Religious Life is to remove impediments to charity, the Religious is therefore under special obligation to avoid every form of venial sin. Theologians do not hesitate to say that the Religious who is habitually careless about the commission of venial sin is thereby in a state of mortal sin.<sup>1</sup>

2. He is bound to use the means ordinarily appointed in his community for attaining the end. One who is careless or negligent about using the means for attaining an end has no real desire for that end.

3. The means which one is bound to use and from which there is no dispensation are all those that are *essential* to the end desired. Foremost among these are the vows to observe the Counsels and all rules that are necessary to their observance. To neglect these essential things would be to renounce the end implicitly, since they belong to the substance of the Religious Life.

4. One is not bound to use all *accidental* means for facilitating the perfection of charity, but only those required by the Rule under which he was professed. There are certain delimitations within which one's service to God will be accepted, and within which the reasonableness of God allows varying degrees of earnestness and endeavour to reach the goal. " Travellers who move towards the same destination do

<sup>1</sup> Schram, *Inst. Theol. Myst.*, i. 22.

not all go at the same rate of speed. Some run, others walk, and there are some who creep. All arrive, nevertheless, if they persevere. There is this difference, that in the matter of perfection one may attain the end more or less perfectly, and arrive at a more or less exalted end, according to the degree of grace and of co-operation."<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered, however, that the deliberate and scornful neglect of the use of any means whatsoever, whether it be essential or accidental, is perilous, and would be avoided by earnest Religious.

5. One is not bound to tend to Perfection by every individual action. The tendency to which he vows himself is a general one, involving the *ensemble* of his life. Nor is he bound in each separate case to choose that which he believes to be the most perfect thing. God, in His tender compassion, ever allows for the weakness of man. He did not require this of us when we took our vows, and He demands only that we pay that which we have vowed. "One certainly did not intend to bind himself to this in entering Religion, and the habitual practice of what is most perfect implies a degree of virtue and of sanctity to which few persons attain."<sup>2</sup> Religious are again to remember, however, the danger involved in deliberately choosing the less perfect course. Human nature being what it is, such lower choice, once indulged, is liable to become more and more frequent, until it becomes habitual, and the soul ceases in any sense to make progress in perfection.

6. The Religious is bound never to cease his efforts

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 193.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

after perfection. He violates the very substance of his obligation if at any point in his progress he concludes that he has attained to a sufficient degree of perfection and suspends his efforts after further advance.

7. St. Thomas teaches that *the Religious pledges his entire life to the zealous pursuit of perfection.*<sup>1</sup>

The word he uses (*studium*) implies that a real energy, an eagerness, is to be used in proceeding about the work. The Religious Life consists, therefore, not merely in doing what may chance to come to hand that leads to Perfection, but in an assiduous applying of oneself to discover and test and use the means calculated to carry one the more swiftly on the way.

We cannot better conclude this subject than by commending St. Augustine's stirring words : " If you cry, 'Enough,' you are lost. Always increase, always make progress, always go forward, stop not in the way, turn not back, turn not aside."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Religiosus totam vitam suam obligat ad perfectionis studium."  
—St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 184, Art. 8.

<sup>2</sup> "Si dixeris, Sufficit, et peristi. Semper adde, semper ambula, semper profice, noli in via remanere, noli retro redire, noli deviare.—  
—St. Augustine, *Serm.* clxix, *de Verbis Apostol. Phil.*, cap. xv.  
Migne, *P. L. Tom.*, 38, col. 926.

## CHAPTER III

### THE VOWS OF RELIGION

#### I. *Of the Nature of Vows*

ACCORDING to the teaching of St. Thomas a vow is a *deliberate promise made to God of a greater possible good*;<sup>1</sup> or, as St. Antoninus expresses it, *a deliberate promise made to God of a better or more perfect action than is necessary for one's salvation*.<sup>2</sup>

A vow is called a *promise*, which is more than a mere purpose of mind. A promise is an act produced by the reason, and ordered by the will, by which one person binds himself to another to do something, or to abstain from doing something.<sup>3</sup>

A mere resolution or promise to oneself may be an act of the will, but we do not impose it upon ourselves as an obligation. There is no sin necessarily supposed to lie in not carrying it out. A vow, however, is a promise to God that binds under sin either venial or mortal, according to the gravity of the case. As St. Augustine reminds us, by virtue of a vow

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.* Vol. i, 94.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 1.



things that before were lawful become to us unlawful.<sup>1</sup>

It must be a *deliberate* promise in order to be an act of the reason, ordered by the will. This deliberation must lie behind a promise in order to constitute it a vow. He who takes upon him a deliberate promise is required to have a knowledge of what he is doing, he must give full consent to it, and the act must not be the result of any coercion whatsoever. In short, there must be no element of ignorance, or fear, or fraud, or force.

From what has been said of deliberation, three things are evident : (1) that one must have attained to the age of reason and discretion before he can make a valid vow. Nor can a person who has not the use of reason make a vow.<sup>2</sup> Theologians agree that in order to secure a valid vow there must be an intelligent knowledge, deliberation, and will, analogous to that which would be required for the commission of a mortal sin.<sup>3</sup> (2) One ignorant of the nature of a vow, or how it binds, would not be bound, even though all the formality of the vow be gone through with. (3) One who is ignorant of the true nature or conditions of the thing concerning which the vow is made, is not bound, if fuller knowledge or information would have caused him to refrain from the vow. For example, I vow to make a gift to a Church, supposing it to be poor. If I discover that it is rich, the vow would be null and void.

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *De Bono Viduitatis*, cap. v. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xl, col. 434.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Gury, *Comp. Theol. Moralis*, i, 320.

Vows of so serious a character as those of Religion or matrimony would not, however, be invalidated by any ignorance unless it affected the *substance* of the thing vowed. This we shall deal with more fully when we come to consider the subject of the validity of Religious Profession. Suffice it to say here that it is just in order that all the deliberation and knowledge possible may be secured in making a Religious vow that the novitiate is ordained for those who are looking forward to binding themselves under vow to the Life of the Counsels. For if the novice is not informed concerning the nature and extent of the vows he takes at profession, and if there is not deliberation and freedom of will in taking them, they are null and valueless.

The promise in order to constitute a vow must be *made to God only*. A vow cannot be made to a fellow-creature. We sometimes hear of a vow made to a Saint ; but this is either not a true vow, or is only a colloquial way of saying that the vow is made directly to God for the purpose of honouring Him in His Saints. A vow is an act of highest religious worship (*actus latriæ*)<sup>1</sup> and cannot be offered to anyone save to God Himself. It is essential that a vow should relate to those things that pertain to the divine pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

This deliberate promise made to God must be for the performance of a thing that is good in itself. But even this is not sufficient. It must involve choice between two good things, the choice, in order to constitute

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 5.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Contra Retr. Hom. a Relig.*, cap. xii.

the promise a vow, to be of the better of the two things. The thing promised must be a higher good than its opposite, and the performance of it must also be better than its omission.

For example, marriage is a holy estate, instituted by God ; but the virgin state is better, according to St. Paul. Therefore to vow oneself to the virgin state, being the choice of a better thing, is meritorious and greatly pleasing to God, and therefore a most excellent object of a vow.

Finally, the thing vowed must be *possible of performance*. A promise to do the impossible could not be received, for no man can be held to do that which is outside the range of possibility.

Nor can a vow refer to useless, foolish, or indifferent things,<sup>1</sup> unless the circumstances give them some character of moral good. For example, a man may offer a vow to God not to go into a certain house. The act in itself of entering the house is not sinful, but if he registers the vow because he always finds grave temptation in that house, it is a valid vow and acceptable to God, being taken for His glory. The end in view in taking a vow must be God's glory. It is needless therefore to add that nothing sinful can be the matter of a vow.<sup>2</sup> If one vowed to do a sinful thing, his only obligation would be to renounce the vow immediately.

Nor can one bind himself by a vow unless he is free. A child, still under the care of parents or guardians, cannot make a vow if it would interfere with the lawful authority of those responsible for him,

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 2.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 2 ad 2.

and such authorities have the power of annulling such vows.<sup>1</sup>

## II. *Of the Matter of a Vow*

The matter of a vow may be : (1) An act that is already obligatory ; *e.g.*, one may take a vow to refrain from festivities in Lent. By so doing he gains a double merit : first, that of doing that to which, as a Christian, he is already bound ; and secondly, he performs the further meritorious act of keeping his vow. To fail in such a case would, on the other hand, involve a double sin ; namely, that involved in breaking the Church's law, and also that of violating the vow made to God.

(2) One may take a vow to do something that is of counsel only. A woman may be free to marry. She will gain " a palm of greater glory," as St. Augustine teaches, by living a life of virginity for love of God.<sup>2</sup> But if she also binds herself by a vow to such a life, she gains the additional merit of obliging herself to do this good thing as an act of Religion. " To do what is of counsel is to do a better and more perfect act than to confine oneself to what is only of precept ; but to bind oneself by vow to do what is better and more perfect is to perform an act which is better and more perfect still."<sup>3</sup> By vowing to perform a precept we bind ourselves with a new bond to a greater faithfulness and devotion in fulfilling the law. To

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 9.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate*, cap. xviii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xl, col. 405.

<sup>3</sup> Doyle, *Principles of Religious Life*, p. 409.



approach the fulfilling of God's law in this way is in itself a merit.<sup>1</sup>

Gautrelet sums up as follows the advantages that accrue from making a vow (1) to keep a precept, (2) to follow a counsel, or (3) to do an indifferent act, as the case may be :—

He says, " In the first case the vow adds a new virtue to the virtue of the action commanded ; in the second, it adds a new excellence to an action already better in itself ; in the third, it adds to an action indifferent in itself a special and formal goodness proceeding from the intention of the one who pledges himself, or from the circumstances in which he acts. Therefore in all these cases the object of the vow is *a better or more perfect action* than what is necessary to salvation."<sup>2</sup>

### III. *Of the History of Vows*

Vows date back to the earliest period of God's dealings with men. The first recorded in Holy Scripture is the conditional vow which Jacob made at Bethel.<sup>3</sup> By the time of Moses, vows were evidently common amongst all conditions of people, both men and women ; and the Jewish law, in its many injunctions concerning them, seems only to have systemized and given legal force and effect to what had for a long time been a wide use. Any good Bible concordance will afford a large number of Old Testament references to vows, showing how frequent they were.

<sup>1</sup> Gury, *Comp. Theol. Moralis*, i, 324. St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 95.    <sup>3</sup> Genesis xxviii. 20.



The earliest example of a Christian making a vow is that of St. Paul, recorded in Acts xviii. 18. In Acts xxi. 23, there is a reference to four members of the Church of Jerusalem who had a vow on them. Hegessipus<sup>1</sup> tells us that St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, was under Nazarite vows. St. Paul's direction to St. Timothy, in 1 Tim. v. 11, mentions the peril of admitting younger widows to the order of widows—*ordo viduarum*, as it was later styled—lest being tempted to break their vow of continence they marry, "having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith." "What is this first faith they have made void?" asks St. Augustine. "They have vowed and have not paid."<sup>2</sup> "They have made of none effect the faith whereby they formerly vowed what they were unwilling by perseverance to fulfil."<sup>3</sup> Among modern commentators Bishop Jackson, of London, follows St. Augustine and interprets the expression "their first faith" as the "promise" or "engagement" made when admitted to the order of widows. Dr. Liddon (commentary on the first Epistle to St. Timothy) speaks of these apostates "carrying within them a sentence of condemnation, to the effect that they have broken their first compact with Christ."

From Apostolic days, the spirit that leads to making vows was strong in the Church, and men and women were encouraged to give themselves generously to God under various kinds of vows, which were

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius. *Hist. Eccl.*, ii, 23. Migne, *P.G.*, Tom xx, col 197.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine. *In Psal lxxv*, 16. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxvi, col. 968.

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, *De Bono Viduitatis*, cap. viii, Migne, *P.L.*, Tom. xl, col. 437.

received by the Church, and enforced sometimes by severe penalties. The highest and most meritorious for both men and women was that of virginity and chastity, as we shall see from St. Augustine, below.

St. Justin Martyr speaks of knowing many men and women of sixty and seventy years old who had lived virgin lives from their infancy.<sup>1</sup> This would carry such cases back to about A.D. 70. As early as the time of St. Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 110), women who had bound themselves by a vow of virginity appear to have been in some degree segregated,<sup>2</sup> and by the end of the third century they became a special "Ordo" in the Church.<sup>3</sup>

St. Augustine urges Christians to be ready to place themselves under vows. "Be ye not slow to vow," he says, "for ye will accomplish the vows with power not your own. Ye will fail, if on yourselves ye rely; but if on Him to whom ye vow ye rely, ye will be safe to pay."<sup>4</sup>

He mentions in the same place many kinds of vows Christians in his day were accustomed to make: "One voweth to God conjugal chastity. . . . Others vow even virginity from the beginning of life . . . and these men have vowed the greatest vow. Others vow that their houses shall be a place of entertainment for all the Saints that may come; a great vow they vow. Another voweth to relinquish all his

<sup>1</sup> St. Justin Martyr, I *Apolog.*, 15. Migne, *P. G.*, Tom. vi, col. 350.

<sup>2</sup> St. Ignatius, *Ep. ad Smyrn.*, cap. xiii. Migne, *P. G.*, Tom. v, col. 717.

<sup>3</sup> See Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. ii, sec. 1.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *In Psal.*, lxxv, cap. xvi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxvi, col. 967.

goods to be distributed to the poor and go into a community, a society of the Saints; a great vow he voweth."<sup>1</sup>

From its earliest days, however, the Church was careful lest unconsidered vows be taken, or improper persons be admitted to them. St. Chrysostom declared that "infinite mischief had been caused by putting widows on the list without due discrimination";<sup>2</sup> and St. Ambrose says, "It is better to make no vow than to vow what God does not wish."<sup>3</sup> The Apostolic Constitutions say, "We permit virginity as a vow to those who wish it, only urging this upon them, that they make not any profession rashly."<sup>4</sup>

#### IV. *Of the Irrevocability of Vows*

While there were cases, no doubt, where Religious, and others under vows, were in some sense relieved of their obligations, with or without good cause, it is a question whether after perpetual vows began to be assumed, any sort of dispensation, in the earlier ages of the Church, was ever contemplated. Certainly none of the ordinary provisions for it that arose in later and laxer times were known. St. Paul, as we have seen from 1 Tim. v. 11, does not contemplate any dispensation of widows from their "compact" with Christ, and Father Puller, commenting on

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *In Psal.*, lxxv, cap. xvi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxvi, col. 967.

<sup>2</sup> St. Chrysostom, *de Sacer*, iii, 16. Migne, *P. G.*, Tom. xlvi, col. 655.

<sup>3</sup> St. Ambrose, *De Officiis Ministrorum*, Lib. iii, cap. xii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xvi, col. 177. <sup>4</sup> *Const. Apos.*, Lib. iv, cap. xiv.

this passage, observes, " No doubt, if they married they were struck off the roll of widows, but separation from their Order did not relieve them from the condemnation which resulted from the breach of their sacred engagement."<sup>1</sup>

The Fathers teem with passages condemnatory of any sort of drawing back from the obligation incurred, and none of them seems ever to consider the question of relief being granted through what in later ages was known as dispensation.

When we come down to the centuries following the founding and organization of the English Church, we still find little or nothing about dispensations. True, one of King Alfred's Laws Ecclesiastical, of the year 877, provides for dealing with the case of a nun who departs from her monastery " without the leave of the king or bishop."<sup>2</sup> This has been thought by some to imply that the king and bishop both had some power of dispensing. This conclusion is very doubtful, especially in view of the fact that it may refer to the right the bishop had to give Religious leave to pass beyond the enclosure, this having no reference, however, to dispensation from their vows.

But, if it be true, it would indicate an abuse of a marked character, and wholly without the warrant of the Rules by which Religious of the period were bound. That the king should claim the power of dispensing Religious vows would be unthinkable in any but an age most corrupt.

The Benedictine Rule contains no suggestion of

<sup>1</sup> From a privately printed letter by the Rev. F. W. Puller, S.S.J.E.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *English Canons*, Vol. i, 321-22.



provision for dispensation. "The Rule contemplates, indeed, the possibility of a monk retrograding from his promise, and re-entering the world which he had renounced, but only as an act of apostasy, committed at the instigation of the devil."<sup>1</sup>

St. Basil is very definite on the subject. In his "Longer Rules" he treats "Concerning those who have devoted themselves to God, and then seek to set aside their profession." Here there is no suggestion that vows can be commuted or dispensed. "Anyone," he says, "who has been received into the brotherhood, and then sets aside his profession, must be regarded as sinning against God Himself, before Whom and to Whom he has made his vows in profession; even as it is said, 'But if a man sin against the Lord, who shall entreat for him?'<sup>2</sup> For he who has given himself as an offering to God, and then betakes himself to another kind of life, is guilty of sacrilege by stealing himself away and so robbing God of his offering."<sup>3</sup>

St. Basil has been said to have "introduced the practice of irrevocable vows into the monastic life."<sup>4</sup> This means scarcely more than that his is the earliest direct written testimony (the Rules were written about 358-361) we have concerning the irrevocability of vows, and that his Rules were the first formal monastic documents that set forth the nature of the binding force of Religious vows. From the form of language he employs, it is evident that he was but

<sup>1</sup> Smith and Cheetham, *Christian Antiquities*, i, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel ii. 25. <sup>3</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fustius*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Morison, *St. Basil and His Rule*, p. 92.



setting down that which he found existing, and that he had no idea of introducing some new thing. Had this been otherwise he could not have spoken of one who set aside his profession as "sinning against God," as "guilty of sacrilege, by stealing away himself, and so robbing God of his offering."

St. Basil's definite statement of the nature of the obligation, however, doubtless had the effect of stiffening the attitude of the Church towards vows taken in Religion. "It would certainly seem," says a recent writer, "that he did his utmost to render the obligation contracted by the monk or nun as binding as possible, and that he is conscious of introducing a new rigour into the practice of the Church in this matter. We have only to read his Canonical Letters, together with the passage above quoted, to be convinced that this is so. Whatever earlier Fathers of the Church may have decreed from kindness and compassion, the virgin, says Basil, 'is to be regarded as the bride of Christ, and a chosen vessel dedicated to the Lord.' If, therefore, she breaks her vow, she is to be punished as though convicted of adultery.<sup>1</sup> This principle is extended to men also.<sup>2</sup> In the early days of monasticism, however, before the intervention of the State, it would be difficult to enforce such vows. But yet everything is done to impress upon the monk the fact that before God his vow is inviolable. He is bound by the laws and enactments of the Church, by the force of public opinion, and by his own conscience, even though the arm of the law cannot reach him.

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Epis.* 199, xviii.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 199, xix.

And, indeed, so far as the monastery itself was concerned, the vows made by the monk at his profession could not be recalled."<sup>1</sup>

The Sixty-fifth Excerpt of Ecgbriht, A.D. 740, says, without noting any exception whatever, "The vow of a monk can in no wise be relinquished. For one ought to pay to God what he has vowed";<sup>2</sup> and the Eighteenth Canon of Cealchythe, A.D. 785, enjoins, "That the vows of Christians be fulfilled," making no reference to the possibility of dispensation.<sup>3</sup>

In 1139, Pope Innocent II declared certain kinds of vows to be "solemn," and those so designated are, under the Roman obedience, difficult of dispensation. The history of this piece of legislation is obscure, but it is very doubtful if Pope Innocent's act was intended to elevate one kind of vow to a place of greater force and dignity than it had before. Rather did it make a distinction unknown before, and as a concession to the laxity of the times, dissipated the force of Religious vows, creating what has been known since as "simple" vows, and thereby affording many persons in Religion a far easier escape from their obligations than the purer and stronger primitive ages dreamed of permitting. This subject is discussed in the following section.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Reg. Fus.* 14. Morison, *op. cit.*, 92, 93.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *English Canons*, Vol. i, p. 198. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>4</sup> Gautrelet is of the opinion that while a so-called "simple" vow was provided for by the Second Council of Lateran, in practice there was no distinction made until four hundred years had elapsed. He says, "Until the sixteenth century there was scarcely anything known in the Church except solemn vows." Since the sixteenth century, and especially since the European upheavals following upon the French Revolution, the Roman Church has been very jealous of Religious

V. *Of Divers Kinds of Vows*

Vows are distinguished as (1) *temporary* or *perpetual*; (2) *personal* or *real*; (3) *conditional* or *absolute*; (4) *explicit* or *implicit*; (5) *public* or *private*; and (6) *simple* or *solemn*.

The first explains itself, being a vow binding one for a limited period, or for life.

A *personal* vow is one that can only be fulfilled by him who makes it, as, for example, when one vows to hear Mass daily. A *real* vow is one that involves his estate. Should one vow to give a certain sum of money to the Church, and die before fulfilling the vow, his heirs must regard it as a lien on the estate, just as they would a promissory note.

Vows are *conditional* when made contingent upon something that may transpire, or happen in the future; as when one vows to become a Religious if he escapes a perilous situation unharmed. Such a vow does not bind if the condition be not fulfilled. An *absolute* vow is one that involves no condition to be fulfilled.

An *explicit* vow is one mentioning definitely the object; for example, "I vow to go to Mass every Sunday." An *implicit* vow is one that binds one to a certain thing only by implication; for example, "I vow to keep the precepts of the Church." One of the precepts is to attend Mass on Sundays, and by the

binding themselves by solemn vows. In France, for example, no Religious Orders for women have been permitted to take any but *simple* vows since 1790. This applies even to such recognized Orders as the Carmelites, the Poor Clares, and the Visitation. (See Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, 136-7.)

latter vow I am just as truly bound to do this as I should be by the *explicit* form used above.

A *private* vow is one that is "made to God immediately and without the intervention of any Religious body whose duty it is to receive it and see that it is performed."<sup>1</sup> Vows taken in a Religious Community and accepted by the Superior, or vows assumed at ordination, are *public* vows.

The distinction between *simple* and *solemn* vows is one that was created at the Lateran Council of A.D. 1139, when Pope Innocent II declared certain vows to be "solemn."<sup>2</sup> Until that date all vows in the Catholic Church were of one kind, to all intents and purposes having the same force as those taken to-day by most Anglican Religious. That is to say, such great Religious as St. Benedict, St. Scholastica, St. Gregory the Great, St. Anthony, St. Jerome, St. Augustine of Canterbury, the Venerable Bede, St. Boniface, St. Anselm, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter the Hermit, Lanfranc, the Blessed Herluin, founder of the first abbey of Bec—in fact, all who were professed prior to the year 1139 knew nothing of the distinction between *solemn* and *simple* vows. The vows they pronounced had to all intents and pur-

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> The second Lateran, or so-called tenth œcumenical, Council was convened by Innocent II, on April 4th, 1139. It was a reforming Council and dealt with a number of important questions affecting the Religious Orders. There are but thirty canons of this Council extant, and none of them refers to the subject of vows. (See Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles*, Leclercq's edition, Vol. v, Part 1, p. 721 *et seq.*) There seems no reason, however, to doubt the authenticity of the long established tradition, extending over many centuries, that this distinction was created at this time.



poses the essential characteristics of what to-day are called *solemn*, as have the vows of those who are professed in most Anglican Communities.<sup>1</sup>

The substance of a solemn vow according to the authorities is stated as follows: "A solemn vow is on the part of the subject *perpetual* and *absolute*, in such a way as that the Religious cannot leave the Order, and the Order cannot send away the Religious. This condition is essential, and is sufficient to make the vow solemn when the Church declares the engagement irrevocable on both sides. This, then, is the distinctive property and character of a *solemn* vow. The other qualities that are assigned are rather the effects of the solemnity of the vow than qualities constituting its nature."<sup>2</sup>

This strict distinction between solemn and simple vows, however, is something that concerns only those under the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church. By her action in the Reformation, the Church of England virtually returned to the older practice that

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, in the Preface to the Rule and Constitutions of the Sisters of the Visitation, is quite definite on the subject, and seems to dispose of any question for those bound by the Roman decrees. "Many weighty divines have formerly held," he says, "that this *solemnity* was essential to the nature of Religious vows. But Pope Boniface VIII, having since determined the contrary, the point is out of all dispute. It must fairly be owned that this property is no way inseparable from Religious vows, since the most celebrated and holy monks of old made their profession without it, and of late Pope Gregory XIII has annexed it to simple vows for the most illustrious Society of the Name of Jesus, by which he has sufficiently declared that this kind of solemnity is so entirely dependent on the authority of the Church that she may remove it from solemn vows without making them simple, and annex it to simple ones without rendering them solemn." <sup>2</sup> Devine, *Convent Life*, p. 102.



was universal until Innocent II, in 1139, authorized for those under his jurisdiction the distinction of *solemn* and *simple*.

## VI. *Of the Obligation of Vows*

Holy Scripture speaks with strong and certain voice concerning the binding force of vows. Nowhere in the inspired word do we find any suggestion of dispensation. The Old Testament is filled with unqualified precepts requiring those who offer vows to God to pay them. The thirtieth chapter of Numbers presents a statement of certain conditions and obligations that are the foundation of all vows, under either the old or new covenant, to the present day.

The principles set forth in this Chapter are those that the writers of the Old Testament had before them when they declared, as they have done repeatedly, what is the obligation of a vow to God. A few instances will suffice to show the mind of the Holy Ghost as He spake by holy men of old :

“When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it ; for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee ; and it would be sin in thee.”<sup>1</sup>

“When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it ; for he hath no pleasure in fools ; pay that which thou hast vowed.”<sup>2</sup> This passage condemns not only those who fail to keep their vow, but those also who unnecessarily delay doing so ; and presents a strong comment on the character of one who fails, as God sees it.

<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy xxiii. 21.    <sup>2</sup> Ecclesiastes v. 4.

Twice the Psalmist gives us the same stern doctrine : " Pay thy vows unto the Most High " ;<sup>1</sup> and " Vow and pay unto the Lord your God. " <sup>2</sup> It is in his commentary on this last verse that St. Augustine gives one of his finest passages on the virtue and force of vows, dealing especially with those of Religious.

The Old Testament principle concerning vows seems to have been taken over by the Christian Church practically without modification. We have seen the cases in the Acts of the Apostles of vows contracted by men, and the interpretation by the Fathers of 1 Tim. v. 11 shows how the vows of widows were regarded.

A vow binds only in the sense understood by him who makes it.<sup>3</sup> The outward form, whatever it may be, cannot oblige beyond the intention of the maker of the vow. So no one in assuming a vow can find himself in conscience involved in a way he did not intend. Should such a condition arise, the vow becomes void because of ignorance, or lack of intention.

Since a vow is a promise to God, " there can be no vow that does not bind in conscience ; so there can be no deliberate violation of a vow that is not more or less grave sin. " <sup>4</sup>

The degree of sin involved depends on the gravity of the matter itself. No one can bind himself to an unimportant matter under pain of mortal sin, and one may oblige himself in a serious matter under pain of

<sup>1</sup> Psalms l. 14.    <sup>2</sup> Psalms lxxvi. 11.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 96.

venial sin only, so far as the violation of the vow *per se* is concerned. What we are saying here applies, however, to private vows only, and not to vows in Religion. Those who take Religious vows in a community have the matter of the vow pre-determined for them either by the Church herself, or by the Constitutions and Rule of the community in which they are professed.

Profession, as we shall see, is a human contract, and one is bound by the generally understood terms of such an agreement, and cannot recede from them by any mental reservation or interior purpose to bind himself so far and no farther, either as to time or matter, penalty or guilt. Were this allowed in making contracts there could be no certainty that any agreement was binding, and grave inconvenience and scandal would constantly arise.

## VII. *Of the Termination of Vows*

Vows taken by Religious may be terminated by (1) Nullification, (2) Dispensation, (3) Commutation, and (4) Dismissal.

1. Under certain conditions Religious Profession itself would be null and void. This we shall discuss when we come to consider the subject of Profession. A Superior has the right to nullify any vow made by his subject, save the vows of Profession, or a vow to enter a stricter Order. These last can only be nullified as the Church, or the Constitutions of the Order, may provide. If a Religious vows, *e.g.*, to say certain devotions daily, besides what the Rule requires, such

a vow is dependent on the permission, and on continuance of permission of the Superior. St. Thomas teaches that a Religious in virtue of his profession is subject in all things to his Superior, and cannot therefore form any engagement, or make any such vow, without his permission.<sup>1</sup>

Superiors are not required to assign any reason for nullifying the vows of subjects. It is the exercise of his dominative right, and in this he is accountable only to God. A good Superior would not, however, be unreasonable or arbitrary in such a matter. He would consult the general good of the community and of the individual, and not merely his own will.

On the same principle, a child, still under the care of parents or guardians, cannot make a vow if it would interfere with the lawful authority of those responsible for him. A parent or guardian in such case may nullify the vow by refusing permission to fulfil it. Any vow taken by a husband or wife that invades the essential rights of the consort is null unless the consort consent.

2. Vows may be terminated by dispensation by the proper authority acting under the proper legal sanction.

Dispensations cannot be granted in a merely arbitrary way, however. Père Gautrelet gives us the principles under which such action may be taken :—

“ First, if the dispensation has been granted without reason it is null, and both he who asks and he who grants it sin if their action has been with full knowledge. It would, therefore, be vain to extort a dis-

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 8.



pensation by violence, surprise, or falsehood. Such dispensation would have no effect, and would not break the bond of the vows.

“ Second, if one has obtained dispensation from his vows in consequence of a grave fault committed with the very intention of thus bringing about the dissolution of the engagements he has contracted with God, the dispensation granted by Superiors may be just, but the Religious has violated the obligation he has imposed upon himself, by deliberately doing something to provoke the dissolution of his vows. He is loosed in fact, but he remains under obligation to make every effort to obtain a revocation of the dispensation or to re-enter Religion in another Order.

“ Third, if he has obtained the dispensation from his vows in consequence of a grave fault not committed for that purpose and without the expectation that its result would be dismissal, the dispensation is valid in all respects ; but there is always an obligation for the Religious to seek to re-enter the Order from which he has been dismissed, or another, in order to correspond to his vocation.”<sup>1</sup>

3. Vows may be terminated in a community by commutation, or change into something better. Ordinarily this is done by passing into another community.

(a) Vows may be commuted by transference to a less strict community. This cannot be done without good and just reasons, nor without the consent of those in authority. By vows in his first Order one has promised God more than he will be able to give in

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, pp. 132-3.



one less strict. God must not be deprived of the rights He has acquired in the first profession ; and the authorities cannot remit God's rights in the matter without very grave reasons, and unless they are convinced beyond doubt that the transference will, for some special reason, be more to God's glory than for the Religious to remain where he is.

(b) Vows may be commuted by passing to a community of equal strictness. Consent of the Order must be had in this case, and while this is more easily given than in the first case considered, since God's rights will not be infringed, still it must be based on good reasons carefully weighed.

(c) If a more perfect Order is in question, natural law permits the change. The subject's profession vows could not bind him never to seek a more perfect and stricter service of God. It would be contrary to perfection to renounce the means of acquiring it in a higher degree. He may pass to a stricter community without consent, but he is bound to ask for it, and that the transference may be effected in a regular way. If he is not finally received into the second community, he must return at once to his former obedience.

A difficult and delicate question arises when it has to be determined which are the stricter and more perfect communities. All authorities agree that a *contemplative* community or one living the *mixed life*, partly contemplative and partly active, must be preferred to an *active* one. There is much difference of opinion, however, as to the relative merits of the contemplative and mixed life. Each

case, doubtless, has to be decided on its own merits.<sup>1</sup>

The question arises of the general wisdom of the commutation of vows by passing from one community to another. St. Basil did not permit it unless the reason was more than ordinarily strong. He cites but one kind of ground that would make the change desirable, namely, if the life of the monastery should grow so lax as to make the practice of virtue impossible. Even in this event, one must not go until he has protested against the degeneracy both to the brethren and the Superior without avail.<sup>2</sup> St. Benedict's Rule has always required a definite vow of stability.

St. Thomas' teaching on this subject has been adopted by most modern authorities. His opinion is that it is not a praiseworthy thing to pass from one community to another unless on account of great advantages to be gained (*propter magnam utilitatem*), or of real necessity. He allows it, however, as laudable under three conditions : when it arises from the desire for a more perfect form of Religion ; when it is to escape from a community that has become relaxed, and in this case he allows passing to a community professing a less strict Rule provided it be better observed ; and when there is such bodily infirmity as prevents one from observing his Rule, although he might be able to keep one that was less strict. What follows on this subject is based practically on St. Thomas.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See chapter on "The Varieties of Religious Life," p. 309 *sqq.*

<sup>2</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusiis*, 36.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 189, Art. 8.

Gautrelet remarks, "The writers who treat of this question, among whom are many Saints, teach that it is rare that this change is useful to the individual, and that it is often dangerous. It can, therefore, be advised only with great reserve."<sup>1</sup>

Another authority declares that "to pass from one Order to another Order, even with a view of greater perfection, although it is in itself lawful, is perilous and is rarely, if ever, to be counselled. It is perilous in the first place, say both St. Bernard and St. Thomas, by reason of scandal to those who are left ; secondly, adds St. Bernard, because it is not safe to leave the certain for the doubtful ; thirdly, according to St. Thomas, to leave a known good, and to begin an unknown life is not wont to conduce to progress ; and fourthly, St. Bernard says that such cases beget suspicion of levity."<sup>2</sup>

4. Certain parts of the obligation of vows may be terminated by dismissal from the community. Nearly all communities lay down in the Rule and Constitutions the definite conditions under which such ultimate discipline is to be invoked, and the methods of its application. It is only necessary, therefore, for us to state some of the general principles that should govern such action.

Dismissal, being the extreme penalty that can be meted out to a refractory Religious, should never be contemplated except as a last resort, and when every possible means of correction has been tried without success. The following causes may justify expulsion :

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, pp. 124-5.

<sup>2</sup> Humphrey, *Elements of Religious Life*, p. 263.

(a) A grievous fault, which is hurtful to his neighbour, and which is known to a moral certainty to be incorrigible. A community is not justified in expelling a member unless, after a very grave and long-continued test, he is deemed to be incorrigible. Open contumacy, however, is not necessary.

(b) A grievous crime which is of such a character as to bring great shame and scandal on the community so long as he remains in it justifies dismissal.

(c) If at the time of profession he wilfully concealed some grave impediment sufficient to constitute a fraud of an essentially disabling nature, a Religious would be dismissed, on the ground that his profession was invalid.

Gautrelet gives us wise and enlightened counsel as to the attitude of all those who may be concerned in the tragedy of cutting off a Religious from the community in which in happier days he had pledged his troth to our Lord Jesus Christ.

“ 1. The person who is to decide the matter of dismissal should be well convinced of the gravity of his action, and take all proper means to assure the justice of the measure. Thus, first, he must above all seek from God, the Source of all enlightenment, that of which he is in need, and should pray and have prayers made for that intention. Second, he should not neglect to seek the advice of prudent persons to whom he may have recourse. He owes this to the Order whose interests are entrusted to him ; as well as to the person whose dismissal is in question, and who has a right to have his cause thoroughly understood and rightly judged ; and he owes it to his own



tranquillity. Third, he should reflect seriously upon the reasons which may influence him to come to this extremity, and carefully weigh the pros and cons. Fourth, he should employ all means in his power to remedy the evil, and, if possible, prevent the unhappy necessity of separating a member from the body of which he is a part.

“ 2. In regard to the person who is sent away, it is necessary, first, to see that he leaves the house without shame and without spot in the eyes of externs. Second, to treat him in such wise that he will have a kind and charitable feeling for the house, and to give him all consolation that can be granted to him. Third, to direct him, if it can be done, in regard to the state which he is to embrace; and to take any possible measures to provide that either in Religion, or in the world, he embrace a mode of life in which his salvation will not be endangered. Finally, he must be aided not only by counsel and prayers, but other means suggested by charity are to be employed in his behalf.

“ 3. As far as persons in the house and outside are concerned, first, it is necessary to take care that the dismissal leave no trouble or disquiet in the mind of anyone. The Superior will, therefore, give an account if need be, of the causes which have necessitated this measure, but he must refrain from speaking of faults which, though real, are not public. Second, everyone must guard against becoming ill-disposed towards the person who is dismissed and conceiving a bad opinion of him. On the contrary, one should lament him, love him in the Lord, and pray the Divine



Majesty to vouchsafe to care for him and to have mercy on him. Finally, one must act in such wise as to render the example useful to those who do not live in a sufficiently edifying manner, to the end that, fearing the same fate, they may be stirred up to amend their ways.”<sup>1</sup>

### VIII. *Of an Expelled Religious*

The expulsion or release of a Religious does not carry with it a dispensation from his obligations, unless it be provided for ordinarily in the Rule and Constitutions under which the vows were taken. “The consecration of ourselves to the *perpetual* observance of our three vows,” says Father Puller, “admits us to a certain stable state of life, the state of holy Religion. Just as married persons are, by their marriage, admitted to the estate of holy matrimony, so Religious are admitted by their profession to the estate of holy Religion. Married persons remain in the estate of holy matrimony even though they may be separated from each other by a divorce *a mensa et toro*, and similarly Religious remain in the estate of holy Religion though they may be separated from their community by release or dismissal. . . . The bond of the three vows is a personal bond, by which the individual Religious is consecrated in a special way to God, and that bond is perpetual and is not affected in its substance by the accident of separation from one’s community.”<sup>2</sup>

The community denies to the expelled Religious

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, pp. 145-7.

<sup>2</sup> From a privately printed Letter by the Rev. F. W. Puller, S.S.J.E.

the exercise of the privileges commonly accorded its subjects, but he is still a Religious and his expulsion is simply the community's visitation of discipline on one of its members. It does not affect the binding force of his vows, any more than it would be affected by forms of discipline that might be administered within the monastery.

This particular point may be dealt with by the Constitutions of the various communities, and those concerned would be governed accordingly.

A Religious who has been dismissed is bound to return to his community should he be summoned by the Superior, or other proper authority. On returning he would not be professed anew, for his expulsion has not changed his essential condition as a Religious. He loses, however, his rank and other prerogatives accorded to seniority, and begins again at the lowest place.

He may enter another community, and thereby terminate in perpetuity his obligations to the community that expelled him. He cannot enter a less strict community without permission of his own Superior, unless he has in penitence sought restoration to his own and been rejected. He may enter a stricter Order or one equally strict, however, without any reference to the one that expelled him.

Though not loosed from his vow of obedience, a dismissed Religious cannot for the time being put his obedience into practice, as the discipline of his community has withdrawn him from the rule of a Superior.

His obligation of poverty is in abeyance to the

extent that he is free to possess himself of such goods as are necessary for him. But this right exists, as it were, by tacit consent of his Superior, who has the power to recall him at any time and restore the practice of poverty in its ordinary detail.

The vow of chastity is in no way whatsoever affected by his expulsion.

He is bound to say the office, and to keep the Rule and customs of his community as far as his circumstances permit.

One dismissed by his community is bound by every means in his power to merit being received back by his brethren, or being received into some other community where he can properly fulfil his obligation. If the circumstances are such that return, or entrance elsewhere, is out of the question, he should seek to have a dispensation granted him "which would be lawful if he has sought by penitence and by all means in his power to efface his past faults, and to correct the faults which have been an obstacle to his vocation."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing that has been said above applies to one who has been dismissed because of invalid profession. Such an one was never a Religious, and cannot be held to any Religious obligation whatsoever.

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, p. 145.

## CHAPTER IV

### HINDRANCES TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE

HINDRANCES to entrance into Religion are of two general classes : first, those that render Religious profession invalid ; and, second, those that do not invalidate profession, but render the making or receiving of Religious vows, for reasons of justice or charity, either inexpedient or sinful.

#### I. *Of Hindrances Invalidating Entrance into Religion*

The hindrances that may invalidate a Religious profession are : (1) absence of reason, (2) the condition of consummated marriage, (3) previous profession in another Religious community, and (4) where profession is made contrary to the Constitutions of the community receiving the profession.

1. The act of giving oneself to God in Religion must be the result of deliberation based upon an understanding of all that is involved in such a step, and those who have not attained the age of mature reason, or who have lost the use of their reason, are manifestly unable to make such a dedication of themselves to

God. It has always been regarded in the Church as a holy and pious custom for parents to dedicate their children to God. Under the Old Testament covenant, Samuel was so dedicated by his mother, and in all ages of Christian monasticism parents have thus made an oblation of their children. The ancient Rule of St. Benedict makes special provision for such offerings ; but in no case does the act of the parent bind the child who, when he comes to the age of reason, is free to confirm the act of his parents or to repudiate it.

2. Marriage is an impediment invalidating profession, because one who is in the married state is not free, but is bound to his consort until parted by death. He has not absolute ownership in himself, and therefore has no right to make that donation of himself which is required in Religion. If, however, either party to the marriage freely consents to the other's entrance into Religion, the impediment is removed, for in such an event there would be no violation of the just rights of either husband or wife. In former centuries such releases were not uncommon, but they are rare to-day, and it is probable that no Religious community amongst us would consider receiving one who had a consort living, however freely the consent had been given. The 118th Excerptum of Ecgbriht (A.D. 740) allowed this only when both husband and wife entered Religion.<sup>1</sup>

3. The ground of the third invalidating hindrance is analogous to the second. He who has already been professed in one Religious community is not free. He has made a donation of himself in that community,

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, *English Canons*, Vol. i, p. 208.



and has no further power over himself. A second such donation would be an invasion of the just rights of his community, unless it gave its consent. In case, however, the Order to which one wishes to transfer himself is of a stricter observance, the first community cannot withhold its permission without special reason.

4. No community has the right to receive members contrary to the provisions of its own Constitutions. Its laws must be complied with, or the profession is invalid. This does not mean, however, that failure to observe every slight provision of the Constitutions of necessity invalidates a profession. It must be inquired in each case whether the intention of the Constitutions is to invalidate professions that are not conformed to the point in question ; or whether it means only to provide for the general well-being of the community by laying down certain requirements. For example, where a Superior unlawfully dispensed an aspirant from his novitiate, his act would invalidate profession ; but if the Master of Novices should fail to comply with some detail of the required training, such neglect would by no means be of invalidating force. Questions of this kind are not likely to arise in well-ordered communities at the present day, but in such an event, each case, considered on its own merits, would require the judgment of those well-versed in ecclesiastical law and custom governing such causes.

Where there is any apparent possibility of these questions arising much embarrassment will be avoided if all doubts are resolved before an aspirant is admitted to the novitiate.

## II. *Of Hindrances Rendering Religion Inexpedient*

There are many circumstances that, while not invalidating it, make Religious profession inexpedient or even sinful. In respect to many of these no hard and fast rule can be made, as they often involve difficult questions of justice and charity that have to be considered and decided in their relation to the circumstances of the particular case.

## III. *Of the Obligation of Children to Parents*

Those who are not of legal age<sup>1</sup> should not be allowed entrance into Religion without the permission of their parents, or of those who are lawfully *in loco parentis*. At the same time, parents are not without sin who baulk a child in entering upon a vocation to which he believes God is calling him.

On filial grounds, however, one desiring to make trial of Religion should seek to obtain his parents' consent, even delaying his vocation for some time in order to secure it ; but being on guard lest he be persuaded for the love of an earthly father to reject the call of his Father in heaven.

The necessity of a parent may prevent a child's entrance into Religion.<sup>2</sup> There are three kinds of possible necessity that have to be considered : *extreme*, *grievous*, and *common*.

*Extreme necessity* in a parent is that which, if not relieved, may lead to possible loss, or shortening, of life. He who leaves a parent under such necessity

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 189, Art. 5.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Art. 6.

sins, and the Superior of any community that knowingly receives one under such circumstances makes himself responsible for such sin.

*Grievous necessity* is that which involves extraordinary hardship to the parent, necessitating loss of position and unusual indigence, or a livelihood maintained only by such drudgery as is unreasonable to expect on account of age or quality. A child cannot, without sin, leave a parent when the necessity is grievous.

*Necessity is common* when it requires the parent to live economically, and forbids luxuries. A child is not bound to defer entrance into Religion when the parent's necessity is common.

In cases of *extreme* or *grievous* necessity, a child is not bound to remain with the parent unless there is reasonable ground for supposing that by so doing he will be able actually to relieve the necessity.

When there are other children equally under obligation who might relieve the parent's necessity, the one desiring to enter Religion cannot do so unless he is morally certain that such others can and will actually fulfil their duty. It does not remove his obligation that others are equally bound with himself, and that they will be guilty of sin if they fail to do their utmost to discharge their obligation.

All obligations concerning the care of parents bind the children not only in respect to present need, but in respect to need in the future. A child should not, however, defer entrance into Religion on the ground of a mere possibility, or even a remote probability, that a parent may in future need his services in

extreme or grievous necessity. If such conditions arise in the future, the child is bound, even though he be a professed Religious, to leave his monastery and devote himself to the relief of the parent as long as may be required. No state of life upon which one enters as a work of counsel can make void an obligation of divine precept such as is created by the fifth commandment.

Nor should such temporary withdrawal from active community life be considered as a dispensation, for it does not lie within the discretion of any Superior to decide whether or not a son fulfils an undoubted obligation to a parent. In the face of such a condition, the vow, for the time being, automatically ceases to bind, because no vow can bind a soul to do what is contrary to the command of God.

No good Religious, however, would fail to take counsel with his Superior as to his best course, and in every possible point to be guided by him.<sup>1</sup>

Such a condition in no sense releases one from the Religious obligation save in those things that are necessary for the discharge of the filial obligation that lies upon him. He is still held by his vows, and as soon as the necessity which called him from his community ceases to exist, he is bound to return. During the time of his absence he will not be competent to possess himself of anything save for the benefit of the parent to whose care he is devoting himself ; and he is in all things bound to obey his Superior and to conform to his Rule save in those points that are incompatible with his duty to his parent.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 101, Art. 4 ad 4.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid*.



In certain cases where no question of personal service to a parent is involved, but only that of securing sufficient goods for bodily maintenance, a community may prefer to allow the necessary sum to a Religious for such use.

In this event, the Religious finds his duty to the parent satisfied, and would not be free to leave the monastery. A Superior might also arrange the work of a subject under obedience, provided he allowed him a sufficient sum from his labour to meet the exigencies of the case. Cassian tells us of the Abbot Archebius, who met a like condition by working within the cloister to relieve his mother of a burden of debt left by his father.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. *Of Opposition of Parents to Vocation*

Amongst us at the present day, the Religious State is held in small repute, and difficulties are made for almost all aspirants by friends and family. It is common for the plea to be raised that one or another should not enter Religion because of some such alleged claim as we have been discussing. There is one question, the answer to which usually solves all doubts, especially in the case of women. Can the one in question leave a parent to enter upon the estate of marriage without working a like wrong? If she can, then there is no doubt that it is right for her to enter upon the Religious State. In other words, if she, without breach of justice or charity, can give herself to an earthly spouse, so as no longer to be able to

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, v, 38. Migne, P. L., Tom. xlix, col. 259.



minister to the supposed need of a parent, no man can gainsay her right to give herself to her heavenly Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Parents and relatives will often oppose the entrance of a woman into Religion, insisting that it would be a disregard of duty to leave an aged father or mother, or younger brother or sister, to answer such vocation. If, however, the opportunity arose for her to make what the world would regard as a good marriage, these same relatives would perhaps be equally insistent that she avail herself of it, and thus settle herself for life.

It stands without any question that when a woman would be free to marry and leave her parents to their own resources for support and care, she is also free to enter Religion.

Those desirous of entering Religion are to be warned to be on their guard against these unjust influences and demands. Our Lord would not accept the one who desired first to bury his father. The argument was the same that we find offered so often to-day. "The old man has not long to live. Let me remain with him to the end, and bury him, and after that I will come and follow Thee." Our Lord would not accept such an offering then. He will not accept it now.<sup>1</sup>

The natural tendency of friends and kinsfolk to discourage one from entering Religion is the basis of the opinion held by all authorities that ordinarily it is not wise for one to take counsel on the subject with

<sup>1</sup> St. Cyril, *In Luc.*, cap. ix. Quoted by St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 101, Art. 4.

those who are near to one by ties of blood or friendship, since their view of the case would, almost of necessity, be prejudiced. Let counsel be taken of those pastors and spiritual guides who can give an unbiased judgment; and in the great majority of cases it is well to let the matter be decided as finally as possible before taking counsel with those whose love and interest would make it difficult for them to weigh the matter aright.

Where such opposition makes itself effective, however, and, through no fault of his, prevents the aspirant from entering Religion, it is not to be taken as a proof that one is not called of God. God's will and purpose in this respect can be baulked, just as in other things the sin or ignorance of men makes His purpose of no effect.

"If after all efforts you cannot succeed," says St. Francis de Sales, "you could not please our Lord more than by sacrificing to Him your will, and remaining in tranquillity, humility and devotion, entirely conformed and submissive to His divine will and good pleasure, which you will recognize clearly enough when, having done your best, you cannot fulfil your desires. For our good God sometimes tries our courage and our love, depriving us of the things which seem to us, and which really are, very good for the soul; and if He sees us ardent in their pursuit, and yet humble, tranquil and resigned to the doing without, and to the privation of the thing sought, He gives us blessings greater in the privation than in the possession of the thing desired, for in all and everywhere God loves those who with good heart and

## HINDRANCES TO THE RELIGIOUS LIFE 67

simply, on all occasions and in all events, can say to Him, 'Thy will be done.'"<sup>1</sup>

### *V. Of the Obligation of Parents to Children*

If a child is bound to come to the relief of the parent, the parent is under a still more binding obligation to relieve a child under the circumstances described. He is the author of the child's being, and cannot without sin evade the duty of caring for the child. He is debarred from entering Religion unless he is certain beyond all reasonable doubt that the child will be brought up and educated in a manner commensurate with his station in life.<sup>2</sup> If others undertake to relieve him of the child's care and training, he must make sure of their ability to carry out their agreement, and he is bound to leave his monastery and assume his own parental responsibility should they fail for any cause whatever to fulfil their agreement. The same principle of duty holds good here as obtains in case of a son leaving his community to relieve a parent.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Letters to Persons in the World* (Mackay), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*, 2. 2, Q. 189, Art. 6.

<sup>3</sup> St. Francis de Sales deals in some detail in chapter xliii of the Visitation Constitutions with the reception of widows who are leaving children behind them. He says: "Caution shall be had not to receive any who have children in such a situation as to render it necessary for them that their mothers remain in the world; nor any of those who are known to be overfond of their children, or subject to solitudes. For although these seem at first to be well-disposed, as being still animated by the fervour of their first impressions, they nevertheless prove shortly after liable to temptation to anxiety, which upon the least difficulty that occurs will come upon them, work their fancy into a thought that if they were still in the world they might do great things for their children, and incessantly move

In certain cases of necessity one is bound to remain in the world to relieve brothers and sisters. This is particularly so when the parents without such aid would not be able to give younger children the training and education due to their station in life. No one has the right to leave an aged or delicate parent, or a widowed mother, to bear such a burden alone.

Ordinarily one is not bound to defer entering the Religious Life because of the necessity of any other kinsfolk whatsoever ; but cases arise where the course to be followed would be dictated by the principles of charity. Such cases have to be decided on their own merits, and no rule of universal application can be laid down for them. As a general thing, foster-parents who have brought up a child, devoting themselves to its rearing, giving the love and care which are ordinarily looked for in a parent, have the same claim on the child as a parent would have, and should not be abandoned in their age or necessity.

#### VI. *Of the Obligation of Debts*

No one is free to enter Religion when it would work injury to another. One who believes he is called to the Religious State must therefore take into consideration in reaching his decision, what debts or obligations he owes to others, and all these must be satisfied

their tongues to speak of them with lamentations ; and though their entrance into Religion might in itself have proved greatly useful to their very children, yet any regret however so little that might be raised in them from other causes would become for them, to the great scandal of many, an occasion of censuring and blaming themselves for retiring from the world."



before an aspirant can be permitted to offer himself for the habit.<sup>1</sup>

Debts are classed as *certain* and *uncertain*.

*Certain* debts are those of undoubted and definite sums owed to definite persons. No one can be allowed to enter Religion until all such debts are arranged to the satisfaction of the creditor ; unless there is no possibility of the debtor being able, either now or in future, to make such a settlement. When it is impossible to pay the debt in any event, he does his creditor no injury by entering Religion, and is free to do so at any time. But if he has any means whatever he is held to do what he can, and must in such a case turn over what he has to his creditors.<sup>2</sup> The expectation of being able to discharge his obligation cannot prevent one from entering Religion, however, unless it amounts to a moral certainty. He is not bound to defer his vocation for an indefinite length of time in the vague hope of some circumstances arising that might enable him to pay his debts.<sup>3</sup>

Debts are *uncertain* when it cannot be definitely determined to whom they are owed or in what sum. Such debts do not prevent entrance into Religion. For example, a man may have engaged in a dishonest business, the nature of which is such that he cannot tell to whom or in what amounts restitution should be made ; or he may have inherited a fortune that had been unlawfully accumulated. By entering Religion such an one dispossesses himself of such

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 189, Art. 6. Also St. Basil, *Reg. Brev.*, 94.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 189, Art. 6. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*



goods, and thereby does all he can to relieve himself of any obligation that lies upon him.

One is not bound to remain out of Religion to pay the debts of a parent unless they involve the latter's necessity as explained above.<sup>1</sup>

### VII. *Of the Impediment of Crime*

Certain conditions resultant upon either hidden or open sin or crime act as impediments to admission into Religion, or render such admission unwise.

1. If through wrong-doing one has done injury to another, and is able by remaining in the world to repair this injury, he should not be admitted to Religion. This applies chiefly to cases requiring restitution of property dishonestly taken from the rightful owner, or to those involving reparation where the honour of another has suffered by the wrong-doing of the aspirant. No one is debarred from entering Religion by these conditions, however, unless he can actually make restitution or reparation by delaying his vocation.

2. One should not be received into Religion who has been guilty of serious crime which would render him liable to the penalty of the law of the land, should the crime be discovered.

3. It is generally considered as a bar to Religion where one's wrongdoing has caused public scandal such as might involve the good name of a community receiving him ; nor should one be lightly received concerning whom future public scandal is liable to

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 189, Art. 6.

arise, even if he has repented of the act, which, if discovered, would produce such scandal.

It is not fitting that a woman should be received into the same convent with virgins, who has fallen from virtue under circumstances that have caused scandal and public loss of reputation. There are special orders for penitents where she may be received.

If it is the case, however, that the fall has not been public, and there has been no scandal or loss of reputation, there is nothing to hinder her admission. Even in cases where the fall has become known, if the sin was committed but once, or when very young, or through frailty, or partial ignorance of the nature and gravity of the sin, and was followed by right repentance and amendment of life, there would be nothing unfitting in her reception. In deciding such cases care must be taken lest any scandal be caused, and the Religious name be brought into disrepute ; but such a woman lies under no sort of disability, unless it be that the Constitutions of the community to which she may apply forbids her reception.

## CHAPTER V

### ENTRANCE INTO RELIGION

#### I. *Of the Signs of Vocation*

WHILE there must be in every case definite signs of vocation in those who offer themselves for the Religious habit, yet it is not possible to set forth in any arbitrary way what these may be. God speaks to souls in various and often unusual ways, and the test must be made by the application of certain principles rather than by looking too literally for formal signs. In ordinary cases, however, certain marks may be sought.

1. The soul seeking Religion should ordinarily have been earnest and sincere in its secular life in the service of God. This does not mean that such a soul must have been well instructed, or even rightly instructed. Like Saul of Tarsus, it may even have persecuted the Church of God, thinking it was doing God service ; but there should have been an earnest effort to follow such light as it had.

2. When one, by temperament and general condition of life fitted for the State, having before him

constantly the calling of all men to perfection, is persuaded persistently that it is the will of God for him to seek this perfection in the Religious Life, this must be taken as a good indication.

3. Again, it is a good sign when such an one is governed by a spirit of patience to wait in his present position as long as God wills, before trying his vocation.

4. It is a most excellent sign when one's desire is seen not to be set primarily upon the Religious Life, but upon accomplishing the divine purpose, and he shows as much satisfaction in being turned back as in going forward to profession, if it is evident that such is God's will.

5. Also when one with a glad and willing heart accepts direction as to the time and methods of seeking a vocation.

6. When such an one desires the Religious Life, but is assailed by doubt, it is a good sign if he is willing to give God and his possible vocation the benefit of such a doubt, with a willingness to go forward without demanding that all doubts first be cleared away.

7. Among the signs that may be looked for is a steadfast zeal in praying for vocation. Any interior drawing towards the Religious Life that a soul may seem to have is a definite call to pray that the Holy Spirit may lead him on to its fulfilment. From the first beginnings of vocation the soul must co-operate with the Spirit, the Spirit moving and persuading, the soul yielding to the divine guiding and, at the same time, praying, "O send out Thy light and Thy



truth, that they may lead me, and bring me unto Thy holy hill and to Thy dwelling.”<sup>1</sup>

8. Père Gautrelet mentions among other signs and tests of vocation that of *constancy*.<sup>2</sup> That is to say, it is not sufficient if the desire for and attraction to Religion come only occasionally and in seasons of especial fervour, sometimes possessing the soul strongly and sometimes forgotten. In regard to mere feeling, however, the same principle obtains here as elsewhere in the spiritual life. “To have the signs of a good vocation,” says St. Francis de Sales, “a *sensible* constancy is not required, but one that is *effective*, and in the superior part of the soul.”<sup>3</sup> That is to say, there must be a constancy, not of mere feeling, but of will, a steadiness in that faculty that alone can give practical effect to any human desire.

9. The same authority also tells us that the desire and longing must be *reasonable*. It is not to be a blind, unreasoning, sentimental desire, disregarding circumstances, and impatient of weighing the pros and cons of the case. There must be willingness to have the case considered calmly and judicially by those competent to deal with it, and the aspirant must be prepared to abide by the verdict that may be rendered.

10. *A desire to act promptly* is a sign of vocation. He who seems to be called, but who wishes to wait without reason, and who makes excuses with the intention of holding back, is to be rejected. If he has a vocation at all, it is certain that such an one is

<sup>1</sup> Psalms xliii. 3.    <sup>2</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, xvii, p. 263.

playing with it, and he is not to be tolerated. Such tendencies are signs that the soul is not converted, and no unconverted soul should be admitted to Religion. St. Augustine tells us that in his unregenerate days his reply to the Spirit's goading was : " Give me chastity and self-control, only not yet."<sup>1</sup>

In considering the above signs, it is not to be thought that no Religious vocation is to be found without them. But when some or all of them are clearly present, and no exterior hindrance appears, one can feel morally sure that the vocation should be pursued.

Previous holiness of life, however, is not to be required too strictly. Many an one who has been unable to control his passions in the world, has, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, fled to Religion as being the only condition under which he could save his soul.

" Religion," says St. Francis de Sales, " tolerates our bringing our bad habits, passions and inclinations,"<sup>2</sup> and one is not to be discouraged in his quest of vocation because his life in the world has been on a low level. If he has the will to reform, entrance into the Life of the Counsels is not to be denied him. " God does not choose us because we are fitting, but He fits those whom He chooses,"<sup>3</sup> and the discipline of either the novitiate or the Professed Life would be superfluous, if souls were supposed to be well-trained in holiness before they came.

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessiones*, Lib. viii, cap. 7.

<sup>2</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, xx, p. 319.

<sup>3</sup> R. M. Benson, *Benedictus Dominus*, p. 231.

“ Religion does not consider it a great triumph,” says the same St. Francis, “ to fashion a mind already formed, a soul sweet and tranquil in itself, but it greatly esteems the reducing to virtue souls that are strong in their inclinations ; for those souls, if they are faithful, will outstrip the others, acquiring by the point of the Spirit what the others possess without any trouble. It is not required of you to have no passions (that is not in your power, and God wills that you should feel them till your death, for your greater merit), nor even that they should not be strong ; for that would be saying that a soul with bad habits cannot be fit to serve God. The world is mistaken in this idea ; God rejects nothing where malice is not found.”<sup>1</sup>

Ordinarily these signs should be accompanied by a loving desire for the Religious Life. Cases arise, however, of genuine vocation in which not only are such desire and affection absent, but in which there is a distinct aversion to the Life, although the soul is convinced that the Holy Spirit is calling him. In deciding such cases it must be remembered that feeling, and sense of enthusiasm, while great helps to the prosecution of an aim in life, are not to be counted as necessary signs of vocation. If such a soul has considered the matter with prayer, and has reached a conclusion as to God’s will, based solely on the ground of reason, he is not to be turned back. If his will is set strongly on serving God in Religion, not because he himself desires it, but because he believes God desires it, he should be encouraged to go forward.

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, xx, p. 320.

II *Of the Motives of Vocation*

Questions concerning motives quite naturally present themselves to those who are seeking to know if they have a vocation. Let it be understood, however, that the solving of these questions belongs not so much to the aspirant as to the authorities of the community to which he may apply for advice and possible admission.

The aspirant has as yet no knowledge of the Life and its requirements, and therefore is not a competent judge of any of these things. He must defer to and depend upon those whose experience qualifies them to pass judgment in so weighty a cause.

The highest motive for seeking Religion lies in a desire for it as a positive good in itself, and not as a mere opportunity of escape from the evil that is in the world. Persons applying for admission into Religion who have suffered misfortune or disappointment or want, in the world, should be tested with unusual care lest, even unknown to themselves, they seek the service of God in Religion with an unworthy and selfish motive.

There is danger that such souls would not only be unable to seek perfection with that *cheerfulness, promptness, courage, and perseverance* that must mark the good Religious ; but going forward with an unworthy motive would risk forfeiting even the salvation which they might otherwise attain by serving God in the world.

Entrance into Religion is not an escape from burdens, but the assuming of a burden, sweet and easy indeed to the magnanimous soul, but grievous



and impossible to be borne by those who undertake it with low motives and selfish intention.

Again, however, too much must not be expected of those who are but newly aspiring after perfection. They know not what it is, and how can they know the way? "Indeed, there are but few who come to God with a sole and undivided intention of serving Him."<sup>1</sup> Even misfortune and disappointment may be the occasion of the desire to enter Religion, and as such they are not to be despised. God sometimes sends trial and loss with this end in view, that the soul realizing the worthlessness of earthly things may be induced to seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.

The attitude of mind that leads one to take the first step towards Religion may, indeed, be in itself even grave sin, but God can and often does overrule it for the soul's good in the end. Men have entered Religion from motives of revenge, from anger, or pique, or to gain some selfish or worldly advantage, and on coming face to face with holy things have experienced a deep conversion that led them on to lives of sanctity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Letters*, xcvi (Lear).

<sup>2</sup> St. Francis de Sales gave his Sisters a characteristically humorous illustration of this: "You must have read," he says, "what Plautus relates of a fine gentleman of the world who was one day dressed and curled very smartly and mounted on his handsome horse, trying in every way to please the ladies; but as he was displaying himself he was thrown by his horse on the ground into the middle of the mud, so that he got up all dirty and muddy. This poor gentleman was so ashamed and confused at this accident that in anger he instantly resolved to become a monk, saying, 'O treacherous world! Thou hast laughed at me, but I will also laugh at thee; thou hast played me this trick, but I will play thee another; for I will nevermore have

Père Gautrelet gives a list of the principal motives that are wont to make an impression on the soul, and inspire it with a taste for the Religious Life.<sup>1</sup> Persons who are concerned in deciding questions of vocation, whether for themselves or for others, will do well to familiarize themselves with these principles and their bearing on the circumstances of the particular cases that from time to time may come before them for decision.

1. The vanity of earthly things, incapable of filling our hearts or satisfying our desires.

2. The disgust inspired by a corrupt and perverse world, and the horror one feels for it.

3. The fear of making, as have so many others, a sad and eternal shipwreck among the numberless rocks found in the world and the snares laid for innocence.

4. The desire of being altogether forgotten, of forgetting self, and living a tranquil life sheltered from the dangers encountered in the world and the agitation which rules there.

5. The fear of sin, into which it is so easy to fall, and which it is so hard to get rid of.

6. The necessity of securing salvation, of avoiding eternal damnation, and the facility one finds for that in the Religious Life.

7. The desire of doing penance for the sins one has been so unhappy as to commit.

anything to do with thee, and from this hour I resolve to become a Religious.' And, in fact, he was received into Religion ; where he lived holily ; nevertheless his vocation came from a vexation." (*Spiritual Conferences*, xvii, p. 266.)

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, pp. 28-9.

8. The hope of gaining heaven, of being assured of a death precious in the sight of God, and of preparing for oneself a favourable judgment.

9. The thought of the spiritual helps which the Religious Life furnishes so abundantly in the exercises of piety, the rules, the vigilance of Superiors, the example of the brethren, enlightened direction, etc.

10. The happiness of living in community with the brethren, sheltered from most of the dangers of the world, far from occasion of sin.

11. The thought of the numberless merits to be acquired in that state, the graces which are its lot, the glory which is to be its reward.

12. The peace, the security, the joy, the happiness of a soul that belongs entirely to God.

13. The examples of the Saints who have gone before us in this noble course, and have left us such wonderful examples of devotion to God and contempt for the world.

14. The desire of giving oneself freely to prayer and contemplation, and of living alone with God in solitude.

15. The assurance of doing the will of God in everything by obedience, and thus avoiding a multitude of sins and assuring real merit to all one's actions, even the least.

16. The consolation of doing something for God, of sacrificing to Him the little one possesses, and of purchasing heaven by renouncing all to follow Jesus Christ our Lord.

17. The desire of being more closely united to God, and of acquiring greater perfection.

18. The desire of becoming more like Jesus Christ, poor, humble, suffering, obedient for our sake.

19. The desire of labouring for the salvation of souls, and of suffering greatly for that purpose.

20. The desire of labouring for the greater glory of God in a manner that is more sure, more excellent, more efficacious, more perfect.

“All these motives are good,” says Père Gautrelet, “and rest on principles of faith, as it is easy to convince oneself. They may, therefore, serve as the foundation of a vocation to the Religious State. It is not necessary to have thought of all; one of them well understood is enough to decide the soul and lead it to make its resolution. Some are more perfect than others, and we have sought to show a sort of progression in those which have been indicated.”<sup>1</sup>

### III. *Of Responding to Religious Vocation*

One who believes he is called to the Religious Life is not bound under pain of sin to respond. The Religious Life is a life of counsel, not of precept, and for this reason no sin *per se* can attach to the act of rejecting a vocation, even though one is convinced beyond doubt that it is the will of God for him. Should one feel convinced, however, that the question of entering Religion involved the saving of his soul, he could not be acquitted of grave sin should he turn his back upon his vocation. This would not be so, however, because of his rejection of vocation in itself, but because he had rejected something which

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 30.



he believed in conscience to be necessary for his salvation.

But while there is no sin *per se* in rejecting a call of God that is not of precept, it is nevertheless a perilous act in view of what its effect may be. If God ordains that a soul shall work out its perfection in a certain state of life, it is a rash thing for this soul deliberately to choose another state in which to seek this perfection.

St. Alphonsus says, "He who chooses the state to which God calls him will save himself with facility." The reason is simple: because he puts himself directly in the way of reaping the innumerable graces and spiritual perfection which God has specially prepared for him.

"For him who does not obey the divine call," continues this great saint and doctor of the Church, "it will be difficult . . . for him to save himself . . . because those helps will be denied him which God has prepared for him in Religion."<sup>1</sup>

In short, God gives us no guarantee of grace for a self-chosen work, and while His extraordinary mercy may, in such an event, still provide us with means of salvation, yet the soul that wilfully and knowingly rejects the plan that God has prepared for it in this world will find it difficult to reach the place He has prepared for it in the world to come. This is far from saying that it will not have a place in the Kingdom, but it is a rash thing to choose a lower place than that which the love of God has prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

<sup>1</sup> St. Alphonsus, *The Great Means of Salvation*, pp. 461-2 (N.Y. 1886).

Under no possible circumstances, however, is a soul to be regarded as reprobate because a known vocation has been refused. Were this true, the chief glory of the Religious vocation would be lost, which is that it is a life of counsel, not of precept, and those who accept it do so not from moral compulsion, but of their own free will for love of God and His service.

Especially is this true when the soul is not aroused to the seriousness of that rejection until it is too late to repair the act ; as after marriage, or when age or infirmity has made Religion impossible. Even when refusal of vocation involves sin, it is like any other act of sin, capable of being repented of. By penitence and zealous service of God, the soul can compensate for its spiritual losses.

It is the teaching of all authorities, following St. Thomas, that long deliberation and much taking of counsel concerning a possible vocation is not to be advised. When we consider our Lord's earnest and repeated exhortation to the Life of the Counsels,<sup>1</sup> it would seem that greater signs are to be required to deter one from embracing the Religious State than to bring one to adopt it.<sup>2</sup>

Generous souls will give God the benefit of whatever doubt may exist, and hasten to embrace the condition of life to which our Lord Himself has attached so many extraordinary assurances of blessing and reward both in this world and in the world to come.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xix. 12, 21, 29 ; St. Mark x. 21, 29, 30 ; St. Luke xviii. 22, 29, 30.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 189, Art. 10.

#### IV. *Of the Duty of Superiors Regarding Religious Aspirants*

So much for the obligations of one who believes himself to be called of God to the Religious Life. An obligation lies also, however, upon Religious communities acting through their proper authorities. If a soul offers himself to a community, it is the duty of the authorities to give him a trial unless definite cause for contrary action appear.

This obligation lies upon the Superior for three reasons :—

I. *For the honour of God.* God has instituted the Religious Life in His Church that He may gain glory and honour from the dedication of souls to His service in the Life of the Counsels. Those who, without reason, bar the way to earnest souls seeking thus to serve Him are holding back from Him the particular honour that He has prepared for Himself. The ordinary human agents He employs to this end are the Superiors of Religious communities, and if through whim or personal feeling they reject an aspirant, they are setting aside the divine honour in favour of their own inclinations. St. Basil says, " Since our Lord Jesus Christ has said, ' Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,' it is dangerous to reject those who desire, by means of us, to draw near unto the Lord, and to take upon themselves His easy yoke and the burden of His commandments which raises us to heaven."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius*, 10.

2. *For the good of his community.* God has not only called individuals to the Life of the Counsels but has called communities into being in order to give opportunity to individual souls. Such communities must be maintained and their numbers kept up. The Superior who, without just cause, rejects an aspirant, is doing an injury to the community, which has entrusted him with authority just in order that he may be able to provide for its well-being and increase. Not only have *personal vocations* to be cherished, but the *corporate service* of the community must be maintained. This also involves the duty of fraternal charity. Each true vocation added to the community strengthens and edifies the whole body and is, therefore, a help to each soul in it, and the edification of the members of the community is one of the chiefest charges laid upon those to whom authority is entrusted.

3. *For the good of his neighbour.* A Superior fails to fulfil his trust and does a wrong to his neighbour if he without cause holds back from souls the blessing and benefit which come from consecrating themselves to God in Religion. His office and authority are to be exercised with this as one of the main ends in view.

It is evident from what has been said that no Religious authority has the right to consult his likes and dislikes in deciding who shall be admitted to a community and who rejected.

At the same time there are considerations that must often weigh, aside from the question of the reality of vocation. One may have a true vocation to Religion, but not to some particular community.



A Superior must have regard to the interests of the Religious Life in general, but he must consider his own community in particular ; and he may judge a man fit for Religion but refuse to receive him for reasons that may be good and sufficient, based sometimes on his care of his community, sometimes on his care to see that the individual find the best environment for fulfilling his special vocation. An aspirant may also be rightly rejected if the community be too poor to support him.<sup>1</sup>

The first care of Religious authorities must be that of the Religious Life in general ; second, that of their own community, not tolerating that which would be to the hurt or scandal of their own society ; and, last of all, that of the applicant who desires to test his vocation. This being so, a Superior who is in doubt concerning a vocation is justified in letting the benefit of the doubt run in favour of the community and against the individual.

It is not a light thing to receive a man into the community when such reception is for better or worse for the entire natural life of the applicant. Once professed, the community is responsible for him, for his conduct and for his support, and a Superior must have positive reason for supposing that he will make a real contribution to its life, or he cannot lay such a burden on the community.

He must make as sure as possible that he has used due diligence to discover the true state of the case in question. Having done this, seeking earnestly the guidance of the Holy Ghost in reaching a

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, *English Canons*, Vol. i, p. 260.

decision, he may follow his judgment without hesitation.

In most cases the principles set forth above apply more to the occasion of profession than to entrance upon the postulancy or the novitiate. Considering that every aspirant must be tested in a long novitiate, and during this period of probation may be sent away, and is himself free to depart at any time, no hurt will in ordinary cases come to the community, or scandal to Religion, by giving the doubtful aspirant an opportunity to prove his sincerity and fitness under the discipline to which the novice is subjected.

In most communities it is customary to receive thus many doubtful cases, and experience shows that more men depart than persevere.

There is an element of fairness in allowing the aspirant the opportunity to try, because in the last analysis there is no way in which he can make sure of his vocation save by testing himself under the actual discipline of the life. It is therefore common for spiritual directors to advise those who seek counsel concerning vocation to proceed as soon as possible to make an actual trial of themselves in some well-ordered novitiate. The furnace of strict discipline in a brief time separates the dross from the gold.

#### V. *Of Inducing Others to Enter Religion*

What has been said above of the responsibility of Superiors applies in a measure to all Religious. All who live the Life of the Counsels are bound to seek by their prayers, and in their intercourse with

externs, to secure all vocations possible, for the glory of God, for the building up of the life and works of their Order, as well as for the blessing in time and eternity that they may thereby bring to the souls that are thus led to God's service.

It is therefore not only right and proper, but incumbent on every Religious, to use all legitimate influence to bring others to the consideration of the Religious Life. In doing this care must be taken not to use undue influence, for it would be far from the divine honour, and almost certainly to the hurt of the soul affected, should one be led to enter Religion from motives of merely human love or respect.

At the present day, when the Life of the Counsels is so little known among us and so little preached, it is especially incumbent on those who understand and value it to do all they can to place it before men. This should be done in so direct and personal a way that, if at all honest with their consciences, they cannot choose but ask themselves the question, "Does God will me to be a Religious?" and having asked it, to seek a response from the Holy Ghost courageously, earnestly, and with prayer.

In Holy Scripture the Life of the Counsels is set before all men, not before a certain class or a chosen few only. The only limitation lies in our Lord's word, "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it";<sup>1</sup> and no man can discover if he is one of those who is able until he has squarely grappled with the question and sought God's aid in resolving it. "Not called" often means "Not hearkening." It is there-

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xix. 12.

fore right and just, both in respect to God and our neighbour, to set the query before all, and thus furnish the opportunity for them to find God's blessing in Holy Religion if it be His will. And no small share of merit and blessing will be accorded to those who have thus for love of God and their brethren been the instruments of bringing men to so great a consecration of themselves to the divine service.

The notion that each soul should be left to its own leading, and that it is ill-advised or sinful to try to influence others to enter Religion, is an error as old as Religion itself. St. Thomas found it necessary to combat it in his day. "Those," he says, "who induce others to enter Religion not only do not sin, but merit great reward."<sup>1</sup> In proof of this he cites the words of St. James: "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins";<sup>2</sup> and the words of Daniel: "They that turn many to righteousness (shall shine) as the stars for ever and ever."<sup>3</sup> The citation of these texts by the Angelical Doctor shows him to be among those who hold strong doctrine concerning the soul that is holding back from Religious vocation. Such an one he regards as "erring from the truth" and needing to be turned from "the error of his way" "to righteousness."

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 189, Art. 9.

<sup>2</sup> St. James v. 20.    <sup>3</sup> Daniel xii. 3.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE NOVITIATE

#### I. *Of the Purpose of the Novitiate*

IN order to enter Religion a period of probation is required. The purpose of this period is (1) to give the individual and the community mutual opportunity of testing whether the applicant has a vocation to Religion in general and to the community in particular, and (2) to secure the proper training of those who are looking forward to the Religious Life.

#### II. *Of the Period of Probation*

The period of probation consists of the *postulancy* and the *novitiate*.

Before being admitted to probation, the aspirant should be required to present to the Superior certificates of his birth and parentage ; of his baptism and confirmation ;<sup>1</sup> a declaration from a competent medical man that he is free from serious bodily disease, and a certificate or other evidence of general

<sup>1</sup> It seems, however, that one may be admitted to probation, but not to profession, before Confirmation and First Communion.

good character. If any of these be not obtainable general information on good authority may be accepted as an equivalent.

There is a distinction between the postulancy and the novitiate that should be kept in mind. During the postulancy the aspirant is admitted in a limited measure to the discipline of the community in order to decide with proper guidance the question of his vocation. When he is admitted to the novitiate, however, he is supposed to have definitely concluded that he has a vocation, and, in becoming a novice, is giving himself to the community to be trained. In the novitiate he is in the position of a man who, for example, enters upon his course of study in a medical school. He is not entering upon his course to see how he will like it, the decision to be made later ; but he has already made up his mind to follow this profession, and is giving himself to be trained accordingly. It may indeed prove that he is not suited for it, but so far as he can judge at the time, there is no longer any question.

The period of probation varies in length according to the Constitutions of various communities. Amongst us, as a general rule, the postulancy is six months, and the novitiate two years.

Among the cenobites of the desert in the early days of monasticism the novitiate was one year, according to Cassian,<sup>1</sup> and Sozomen records that under the rule of Pachomius on the island of Tabenna in the Nile, novices underwent a training of three years.<sup>2</sup> In the

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, iv, 7. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 160.

<sup>2</sup> Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, iii, 14. Migne, *P. G.*, Tom. lxvii, col. 1072.

time of St. Gregory the Great the period in the West had been set at two years.<sup>1</sup>

For many centuries in the greater part of the Western Church the novitiate has been one year. A constitution of Peckham, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1281, prescribed this period of time for novices in the English Church, and since the Council of Trent this has been the general rule in the Latin Church, although not universal.

All authorities agree that the novitiate should run its full time as provided in the Constitutions, that is to say, it should run from the hour of taking the habit to the same hour on the day on which the period ends. No difference is made because of leap years.

The constitutional period of the novitiate is set as a minimum. The aspirant has no right to demand profession immediately on the expiration of his novitiate, and it is within the right of the Superior to defer it according to convenience, or for further testing, or training.

The novitiate, in most communities, may be extended if the novice does not seem to have been sufficiently tested ; if he is uncertain of his vocation, or for any other cause. " It would be better to resort to this expedient than to dismiss at once a person of whom there is some hope ; but there must be some probability of success in this extension."<sup>2</sup> The authorities agree, however, that an extension amounting to more than half the time of the regular novitiate is not to be advised.

<sup>1</sup> Reichel, *Manual of Canon Law*, Vol. ii, 101.

<sup>2</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, pp. 75-6.

If one passes from one Order to another, whether before or after profession, his period of novitiate in the first does not ordinarily suffice for the second. He does not know the Order, nor does the Order know him, and therefore one important object of the novitiate is not attained.

By a common custom, if a novice appear to be dying, he is allowed to take his vows. If he recovers, however, he is bound to continue his training until the end of the period set for his novitiate, for this is not a profession in the strict sense, since it was not a "public, legal, and authentic engagement."<sup>1</sup> After such a profession, however, the community cannot send away the novice without sound cause. The novice, even more than the community, is strictly bound to ratify these vows, and cannot refuse to do so without the gravest reasons based on causes arising after the vows were made.<sup>2</sup>

### III. *Of Entrance upon Probation*

One wishing to make trial of his vocation ordinarily applies to the Superior of the community he desires to enter, and is required to make a visit of some duration to a house of the Order. This is required that he may see something of the Life as lived in this particular Order, and that the authorities may learn to know him and judge somewhat of his character and fitness to go forward.

At this point one of the chief opportunities of testing lies. An aspirant should not be too readily

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 88.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. i, p. 89.



received. The Rule of St. Benedict sets forth the principle which should be enforced. "To him that newly cometh to change his life,"<sup>1</sup> it says, "let not an easy entrance be granted, but as the Apostle saith, 'Try the spirits if they be of God.' If, therefore, he that cometh persevereth in knocking, and after four or five days seem patiently to endure the injuries done to him, and to persist in his petition, let entrance be granted him."<sup>2</sup>

Cassian tells us that in the days of the Fathers of the desert, aspirants were kept thus waiting for ten days, or even longer, as a test of their "perseverance and desire, as well as of humility and patience."<sup>3</sup>

According to the rough manners of ancient times this testing at the gate of the monastery was of a rude character well suited to try the humility and determination of an applicant. At the present day the method commonly is to receive the applicant in the guest-house for a sufficient time to learn something of his character and of the spirit that actuates him. This period often depends on how well known he is to the authorities of the Order.

Such visitors should be treated with courtesy and charity, but should be made to feel that they are on trial, and that they may at any time be sent away if their conduct and attitude are not such as to indicate humble and earnest desire to know God's will concerning them.

An applicant for admission to a Religious commun-

<sup>1</sup> In ancient times entrance into Religion was generally spoken of as "Conversion." <sup>2</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, iv, 3. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 155.

ity should understand that he is a suppliant seeking a high privilege, both spiritual and temporal, and he is called upon to show a definite worthiness of having it granted him.

#### IV. *Of the Obligations of the Novitiate*

The entrance into the novitiate is of the nature of a tacit contract between the aspirant and the community. The former gives himself to the community under obedience to be trained for the Religious Life, while the latter agrees to give him the required training; supporting and maintaining him in the meantime. This contract is terminable, however, at any moment by either party. The community may send a novice away, and is not bound to give any explanation or reason for its action; and the novice is free without fault or dishonour to depart at his own will and discretion, without even consulting with Superiors as to the wisdom of his course.

During his term of probation the novice is not bound *in conscience* to obey his Superior, or to observe any rule, for he has taken no vow of obedience and cannot be held as if he had. So long as he remains in the novitiate, however, he is bound as a matter of *justice* to fulfil the contract which was implied, if not expressed, by the community admitting him to the habit.

On the same principle he is not in conscience bound to poverty. He can acquire and dispose of property at will, although the regulations of the novitiate may limit or forbid his dealing with material goods. In order to avoid distraction, an aspirant should be

required before entering the novitiate to arrange all properties in such a manner as to free him from the burden and anxiety of administering them during the term of his training and probation. This should apply not only to his own properties, but also to such as he may be administering in the capacity of trustee, executor, etc.

Entrance into the novitiate does not bind one to chastity by any new obligation beyond that of the moral law, save that the honour of Religion and the avoidance of scandal demand that he exercise greater discretion than would be necessary in the world.

Since novices do not, like professed Religious, live under the obligation of vows, their merits as well as their faults have to be judged in relation to the *virtues* rather than to the *vows* of poverty, chastity, and obedience. We shall see the distinction between the vows and the virtues when we come to consider the Counsels. Novices are, however, required to observe some Rule in the novitiate, and they must remember :—

1. That when one is undertaking for God's glory to live under any Rule whatever, even if it does not strictly bind in conscience, it is rare that he breaks it without sin, because the violation of a Rule generally arises from some evil motive, and every act that is performed with an evil motive thereby becomes evil.

2. Even if no positive obligation exists such as would be induced by a vow or promise, there is on many points an indirect obligation called out by the general precept of charity not to transgress in such a way, or be guilty of such violations, as would give

scandal or pain to one's brethren, or to those outside the community.

3. Even if one is not bound by the vow, one can always gain merit by practising the virtue ; and it is no light matter for one who is supposed to be in preparation for a life-long dedication of himself to God to be indifferent to the virtues that belong peculiarly to the Religious State.

A novice may be dispensed from his Rule more easily than a professed Religious, for the reason that he is under no obligation like that which the professed incurs when he takes his vows.

The chief obligation the community assumes in receiving a novice is that of giving him the special testing and training that should ordinarily result in making him a good Religious. The community that maintains a lax novitiate is guilty of an injustice to the novice that can hardly exist without actual sin on the part of some one in authority.

#### V. *Of the Continuity of the Novitiate*

To the end that the necessary training and testing may be given, in most well-ordered communities the novices are ordinarily not permitted to leave the house of the novitiate during their term of probation, except under the immediate direction and care of their Superior. Exceptions to this Rule are made only for grave cause.

The period of the novitiate must be continuous, that is to say, it must be morally without break. Any withdrawal from the discipline of the novitiate, whether by act of the novice himself or of his Superior,



breaks the required continuity, even though it be but for an hour ; and the novitiate must be begun anew.

This does not, however, mean mere absence from the house of the novitiate, unless such absence be with the intention of terminating the agreement entered upon when the aspirant was received. Even if a novice departs from the novitiate for a short period of time (an "absence of some days," says Humphrey) with a wicked and rebellious motive, but without the intention of abandoning his vocation in the community, this act of itself does not interrupt his novitiate, although it may be of sufficient seriousness as a breach of discipline to warrant his Superior in dismissing him. Many communities provide in their Constitutions for dealing with such cases. "It would seem hard," says Gautrelet, "to make a person begin all over again if after ten months (or even twenty in Orders where the novitiate lasts two years) he should yield to a temptation of weariness, and then two or three days after his departure, dismayed by his fault, should return to beg forgiveness for it."<sup>1</sup>

If a novice should be sent away on a false accusation and should return when his innocence is established, he should not be made to begin anew.

"To dwell within the cloister during the period of probation is of the *substance* of noviceship in this sense, that wheresoever the Religious is living, he is considered, if he is living there under obedience to his Superior, to be within his religious cloister. If a novice should be sent anywhere else by his Superior, and even if he should remain there for many months, he

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 74.

will nevertheless be truly on probation, since he is truly living under obedience to his Superior."<sup>1</sup>

The same principle holds good in regard to many other circumstances that interfere with the *actual* discipline of the novitiate. A novice may be sick through a larger part of his probation, but if he remains under the obedience of his Superior, this is regarded as a good and sufficient novitiate. An exception is made in cases of insanity.

We conclude therefore that the *actual* discipline and testing is not necessary for the *substance* of the novitiate. A community may fail to offer the proper discipline, or a Master of Novices may be unfaithful to the trust reposed in him, but the novice is not to be held responsible for this if he yields himself in good faith to be trained. The fact that his probation has not been a real one is his misfortune, not his fault, and he should not be made to suffer for it.

## VI. *Of the Signs of the Good Novice*

St. Benedict in the Holy Rule tells us that four external signs are to be demanded of the novice. He must (1) give proof that "*he is truly seeking God*"; (2) he must have "*an eagerness for the Work of God*"; (3) an eagerness "*for obedience*"; (4) an eagerness "*for humiliation.*"<sup>2</sup>

The first is the chief and all-inclusive mark of the true aspirant to the life of perfection. The last three are rather tests and proofs of the first.

<sup>1</sup> Humphrey, *Elements of Religious Life*, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 58.

1. It must be God and God only whom the novice is seeking. Self-will, however it may seem to direct the soul towards good and holy things, must be put aside. *Voluntas Dei* must be the motto; and he must show that at least in will and desire he seeks only the divine will, however it may be expressed. He who is thus setting out to seek God will subordinate all things to His will. He cares not what disposition is made of him. He can as readily rejoice in being turned back from what he hopes and prays may be his vocation as in being allowed to go on to profession. His attitude must be summed up in the words of Hilton's pilgrim: "*I am nothing, I have nothing, I covet nothing, but only the love of our Lord Jesus.*"<sup>1</sup>

The word *sollicitus*, employed in the Holy Rule, which, following Canon Doyle, we have rendered *an eagerness for*, is difficult to translate. Dom Oswald Blair, in his translation of the Rule, renders it *fervent*: while in a familiar passage of the "Imitation" most editors have rendered it *anxious, solicitous*.<sup>2</sup> Its etymology seems to indicate being *wholly aroused*, every faculty and sense keen and alert to spring forward at a moment's notice to accomplish the work proposed. This, then, is the spirit that must actuate the novice in Religion.

2. Has he, also, "an eagerness for the Work of God"? By this expression St. Benedict meant the Divine Office, or *Opus Dei*, as it was commonly called, and all the work of prayer that pertains to it and supports it.

<sup>1</sup> Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, p. 165 (London, 1870).

<sup>2</sup> A Kempis, *De Imit.*, i, 13.

This idea of eagerness does not imply that the novice must evince a *feeling* of love for prayer. It cannot be too often set before souls seeking perfection that *love lies not in the emotions but in the will*. He that wills resolutely, courageously, and perseveringly,—note these qualifications—to love the work of prayer is setting forth the sign of true vocation.

3. Has he “an eagerness for obedience,” unafraid in the face of difficulties, ready without hesitation to try even apparent impossibilities, if the voice of authority speaks? And realizing the true essence of obedience, is he eager for the mortification of his own will, fearful of trusting it even when it may be allowed, and preferring to set it aside in favour of the will of another?

4. Then, above all, is there a like “eagerness for humiliation”? This last is the full and final test, for true Religion consists in humility, and according to a well-known saying of St. Bernard: “Humiliation is the path to humility, as patience is to peace, as reading is to knowledge.”<sup>1</sup>

## VII. *Of the Spirit of the Good Novice*

We must venture a summary of the spirit of the good novice regarding the discipline and opportunities of the novitiate.

The foremost aim of the aspirant must be to learn the meaning and extent of the obligation he is about to undertake. He will do his utmost to gain the best conception of the end that the Religious Life pro-

<sup>1</sup> St. Bernard, *Ep.* lxxxvii. Migne, *P.L.*, Tom. 182, col. 217.



poses, namely, that of union with God through the development and daily practical exercise of the virtue of love. He will spare himself in nothing, that he may learn the means by which this end can be most surely attained. He will not be content to limit himself to such knowledge of these means as may be obtained from reading or from the instruction of his Superiors. He will be moved by a strong and persevering desire to practise them, and thus gain actual experience in the life that he proposes to live.

So far from being pleased if it be made light for him, while accepting humbly whatever course his Superior takes with him, he will the rather fear lest he be missing opportunities of practising that humility and obedience which he must learn by means of definitely assigned lessons if he is to become a good Religious. He will desire the best and fullest tests. He will wish to feel the full weight of the yoke before assuming it for life, and will spring forward with gladness of will, even though there be much repugnance of natural feeling, to submit himself to whatever is laid upon him. Nor will he be dismayed by this repugnance, but rather will he exert himself the more strenuously, recognizing it as a sign of a natural weakness which it is his one business by God's help to overcome.

Instead of yielding to a sense of resentment when his Superiors set a deliberate humiliation for him, he will happily co-operate with them, like a courageous patient who nerves himself to be firm and still, rendering every possible assistance to the surgeon while the knife does its healing work. Instead of indulging a sense of nervous self-consciousness

towards them because they have been the instruments of his humiliation, his heart will be drawn towards them with the gratitude one naturally feels towards a true friend and benefactor.

So far from such resentment will he be that conceiving for them a supernatural affection he will with simplicity of spirit give them his entire confidence, opening his heart without reserve to display every symptom of the disease that the novitiate is designed to cure, that they may the more surely apply the remedy he desires to receive. He and they will have but one mind and one heart in this great enterprise, and understanding each other they will be able to work together as yoke-fellows in Christ for the attaining of his perfection.

Nor will he be discouraged at the seeming slowness of his progress. He will appreciate the truth that "grace as well as nature produces her most perfect works only imperceptibly and by degrees,"<sup>1</sup> and instead of discouraging him, this condition will stimulate him to greater effort to overcome the faults that retard his rapid progress along the way of perfection. At the same time he will understand that perhaps there is no greater sign of progress than a sense of failure; for such a sense indicates that the soul is beginning to realize the greatness of the undertaking, and the inadequacy of his natural equipment to carry it out, which realization is necessary if one hopes to take a single effective step in the direction of the goal of perfection.

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, 65.

VIII. *Of the Spirit of the Bad Novice*

Much that we learn in this world is gained by observing contrasts. We have considered the character of the good novice. Let us see what we can learn from the comparative consideration of the bad novice.

Usually the failures of such a novice arise from pride and vanity. He comes to the community with no real sense of need. He is attracted too often by some sentimental consideration, or by the work he sees the community doing, and has no conception of the life that lies behind the outward activities. He has read certain books on Religion, and so shallow is his view of the State he is undertaking that he thinks this kind of knowledge is sufficient without putting it to the test in his own daily life. He is surprised, awakened, as it were, with a shock, when after a few days in the novitiate, he meets with some humiliation or discipline at the hands of his Superior. He adopts the view that the ordinary routine of the life contains ample opportunity for discipline without further opportunity being planned by the Master of Novices. He takes the position in his own mind that he is quite willing to be humiliated when he is guilty of some breach, but that when he does well and is buffeted for it, he cannot be expected to find satisfaction in it. When the Novice Master, true to his trust, makes things hard for him, he grows despondent, and if this discipline is applied with such a spirit that he cannot fail to see that love is behind it, he is depressed all the more, wondering why one who so plainly loves him should deal so harshly. So little does he realize his need !

He yields readily to every natural repugnance to the discipline of the life, and instead of stirring himself up to resist it, he adopts it as the normal attitude he is to assume.

This cannot fail shortly to grow into a feeling of soreness and of self-pity. He shrinks from the touch of authority with a sensitiveness that defeats its most loving approaches, and "considers as a tyranny the kindly care that is directed to the salvation of his soul."<sup>1</sup> He is nervously self-conscious in the presence of his Superior, and his instinctive study is to avoid by every possible means giving him his confidence.

Long before this time, he has come to look on the period of his novitiate as a time that must indeed be endured, but he longs for its termination, and looks forward to the greater freedom of the professed life, unable to realize that without the wholesome training the Father Master is seeking to give him, the Religious Life will be an intolerable yoke of slavery. Or perhaps, more honest with himself than this, it begins to dawn upon him that he has no vocation—(he does not realize, perhaps, that he had one and has thrown it away)—and he contemplates returning to the world. Again, however, his vanity interposes; he fears he will be thought by his friends in the world to be inconstant and vacillating, and he shrinks from such criticism with the same sensitiveness with which he seeks to escape the discipline of the novitiate.

And so he goes on, keeping his external rule, baffling his superiors, gaining no inch in perfection, but rather drifting back, until the time of his proba-

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius*, 52.



tion is over. Then perhaps he is rejected by the chapter, and goes away convinced that the Religious Life to which he gave no honest test is a failure and a snare. Or worse still, the community gives him the benefit of the doubt, and professes him ; and then begins the life, every hour of which brings him nearer to final failure, unless by God's mercy he be awakened to conversion and seek to create again for himself the opportunities of discipline and spiritual healing that he rejected when in the novitiate they were offered so abundantly and under the best conditions for reaping their precious fruit.

#### IX. *Of the "Fervor Novitius"*

Care must be exercised and prayer employed, if those who are charged with the training of Religious would be able rightly to discern between what may be a weak, sentimental idea of Religion, and that gift of God that St. Benedict calls the "*fervor novitius*."

"Daily experience," says Father Baker, "confirms that which spiritual writers observe, that God in great goodness to souls, does usually, upon their first conversion, bestow upon them a great fervour in divine and religious duties, which, therefore, our holy Father calls *fervorem novitium*. Yea, even naturally the inbred liking that our infirm nature has to all novelty and change causes a more than ordinary pleasure, diligence, and earnestness in any new-begun employment . . . Good souls, therefore, are often to be exhorted to make good use of this fervour, and to improve it diligently (yet with discretion) thereby to produce in their hearts an unshaken resolution to

proceed in the ways of the divine love, notwithstanding any contradiction or pain that may happen. They must not expect that this fervour will be lasting ; for being seated in the inferior grosser part of the soul, it is not of long continuance.”<sup>1</sup>

While the emotions are not the seat of the highest love, which, as we have seen, resides in the will, yet feeling and emotion are not therefore to be despised. They are often snares to the soul, but they may be gifts from God, and even when they represent but the moving of the superficial nature, they can be so employed as to glorify Him.

Let the novice be taught the right meaning of spiritual fervour, and let him be instructed concerning the signs of the fervour that truly proceeds from the Holy Spirit. St. Basil points us to the test when he says that “ he is fervent in spirit who with insatiable desire and earnest endeavour *does the will of God* in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

Father Baker says in another place, “ A noviceship is a golden time for the learning and practising matters of the Spirit,”<sup>3</sup> and while solid dependence must not be placed upon mere enthusiasm, yet this very enthusiasm may often carry one over hard places. It is like the surf beating upon the shore in time of storm. It threatens to engulf the life-boat that is seeking to land its precious cargo, but a skilful hand at the helm knows how to employ the very force that threatens destruction and compel it to sweep the frail craft to a place of safety.

<sup>1</sup> Baker, *Sancta Sophia*, pp. 183-4 (London, 1876).

<sup>2</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Brevius*, 259.    <sup>3</sup> Baker, *Sancta Sophia*, p. 185.

While guarding against the merely natural fervour with which a novice may begin his work, it must be remembered that there is often a reaction that is liable to produce a corresponding disgust that may threaten to overwhelm him if he is not wisely taught how to meet it. What has been said above concerning feeling and emotion applies to this condition as well as to the other. The *tedium claustrii*<sup>1</sup> is a very real element which stands over against the *fervor novitius*, waiting to replace it. This sense of disgust involves a temptation, and for this very reason it is an opportunity of merit, as it gives the novice, as long as it lasts, continual occasions of victory over the adversary. In the earlier period of one's trial he may experience such joy that he serves God for selfish pleasure only. There is no such snare possible in these times of disgust. Now we serve God from pure principle, not for any selfish reason, and in this there is greater merit.

#### X. *Of the Dismissal of Novices*

The grounds for the dismissal of a novice are reduced by the authorities to four :—

1. The interests of God's honour.
2. The interests of the community.
3. The interests of the novice.
4. The rights and interests of persons in the world.

*First.*—It would not be for the glory of God for one to continue in the novitiate who indulged bad habits in important matters, or who was subject to serious vices, and who in either case gave no evidence of

<sup>1</sup> Willis Clark, *Augustinian Observances of Barnwell Priory*, p. 132.

earnest effort for amendment. The graver the fault, the less should it be tolerated, even though it be secret and there be no danger of scandal.

*Second.*—The general good of the community must be considered, and, therefore, a novice should not be retained if a serious fault or impediment be discovered, especially if the aspirant had deliberately concealed it ; or if the tests applied show that he would be able to make but little contribution to the life of the community, or would be liable to become a burden to it. In these cases, it would be an ill-regulated charity that would seek to keep him in the novitiate. If one be of a factional, restless or turbulent nature, inclined to sow dissension amongst the brethren, or to incite them to discontent or rebellion ; if he show himself critical and impatient of the methods of the community, it would be a want of charity on the part of the Superior towards the Order to retain him, as his presence would be against the common good. Nor should one who shows weakness or instability of mind be encouraged. St. Francis de Sales sums up the extremes to be guarded against with his unfailing felicity of expression. “ The community,” he says, “ shall decline the admission of any persons who are mutinous and stubborn, or else unsteady and fickle, because the former stick too much to their own conceits, and the latter stick to nothing.”<sup>1</sup>

*Third.*—If the physical strength and health of a novice are insufficient, so that there is manifestly no place for him in the life and work of the community,

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, xliii.



his own interest would require that he be allowed to withdraw. If his condition had been known to the Superior before he was admitted to the habit, he could not be so readily dismissed ; but if he had concealed some physical weakness or defect, he could not expect to receive such consideration.

One who could not submit himself in obedience, or adjust himself to the life and customs of the community, whether the cause be his own fault or not, should be sent away. It would not be for his happiness to retain him under a yoke he could not bear, and even his salvation might be thereby imperilled.

*Fourth.*—As we have already seen, there are certain persons in the world whose rights may condition the entrance of an aspirant into Religion. If it transpired that the aspirant had a living spouse, he would be dismissed. Likewise if it were discovered that he had large debts concerning which he had been silent when he applied for admission. The same rules that have been given concerning the needs of a parent, or certain other relatives, apply even more freely to a novice than to one who has been professed.

### XI. *Of the Master of Novices*

When one considers the seriousness of Religious Profession, and that it binds the individual as well as the community as long as the former shall live, it will be understood of what grave importance it is that the novices be well trained.

For this reason the Master of Novices in all communities is regarded as one of the most important officials, more important in many respects than the

Superior himself, for to him is entrusted the moulding of the community. Its future is in his hands, as in those of no other official, and the stamp he sets upon the young Religious will give tone and colour to the community in years to come.

St. Basil is the first of the Fathers to describe in detail the qualifications of him who would train souls in Religion. In order to be "a safe guide," he must be, he says, one "who knows well how to lead such as are journeying Godward, who is rich in virtues, showing forth by his works his love for God, and being wise in the Holy Scriptures."<sup>1</sup>

The Rule of St. Benedict speaks especially of the character of him who is appointed to train the novices: "Let a senior, one who has the address of winning souls, be appointed over him to watch him with the utmost care, and to see whether he is truly seeking God and has an eagerness in the Work of God, in obedience and humiliation."<sup>2</sup>

The seniority of the Master of Novices is not necessarily that of years, but must, in every case, be that of spiritual experience and ripe learning in spiritual things.

"His knowledge must be experimental as well as scientific," says Doyle. "He must have gone through all its duties, and encountered its many difficulties, and tested the weight of the yoke which it imposes. This will give an authority to his words, and infuse into them a persuasive power which cannot be acquired either from books or from the closest mental application.

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *De Renunciatione Saeculi*, 2. <sup>2</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 58.

“ In the next place he must, as St. Benedict expresses it, ‘ have the address of winning souls to God.’ This consists in knowing how to point out to those who ask him for instruction the surest ways of going to God ; in being adorned with all virtues, so that his daily life will be the best commentary upon the doctrine which he imparts to others ; and in a wide and deep knowledge of spiritual things.

“ This skill is acquired and developed by seclusion from the turmoil of worldly affairs, by the cultivation of repose and peace of soul, by an ardent love of God, by the repression of anger and of impatience, by the elimination of proud and vainglorious thoughts, and by constancy in the service of God.

“ Lastly, he must be filled with solicitude for the spiritual well-being of those who are entrusted to his charge, and by every means in his power strive to advance them in the love of virtue and of God.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus does a spiritual master of our own time depict the spirit who is fitted to train souls for the life of Holy Religion. He is to be rich in spiritual experience, and know how to profit by it in his own life, and he is to be learned in the lore of the moral and spiritual life.

Mere book-learning cannot fit one for training others, but without a definite knowledge of the three great branches, dogmatic, moral and spiritual theology, such an one will not only be unable to help souls to advance, but will hold them back or give them such wrong direction as may lead to spiritual atrophy and disaster. We remember how St. Teresa

<sup>1</sup> Doyle, *The Teaching of St. Benedict*, pp. 301-2.

tells us that she was for seventeen years baffled and retarded by spiritual directors who were ignorant of theology, although men of piety and even sanctity of life.<sup>1</sup>

The Master of Novices is bound, as his judgment, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, directs, to give his novices all the training that is required to bring them to the degree of virtue necessary to good Religious. He is obliged to this on two accounts.

*First*, he owes it to the community that has entrusted him with so grave a responsibility, to use every diligence to train aspirants so that they will be able to make a worthy contribution to its life and work after profession.

*Secondly*, he is bound in justice to give the novice the requisite training, and failing to do so, he, as the representative of the community, violates the contract that was made between his Order and the novice when the latter offered himself for training and was accepted.

On these two accounts we see, then, that a Master of Novices cannot be acquitted of grave blame if, through any fault of his, a novice who sincerely desires to yield himself to be trained, fails to be led on to the required degree of virtue ; and that he may have every opportunity of discharging so grave a responsibility he should be relieved of all other business of the monastery or the community as far as may be.<sup>2</sup>

One further obligation the Holy Rule lays upon the

<sup>1</sup> St. Teresa, *Autobiography*, ch. v, 6-8.

<sup>2</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, ch. xxxiii.



Master of Novices. Speaking of the aspirant, it says, "Let all the hard and rugged paths by which we walk toward God be set before him."<sup>1</sup> Two centuries before, St. Basil had given like counsel to those set to train novices. "Show him," he writes, "the difficulties and distresses of the straight and narrow way. . . . See, too, that he have put before him all things that are essential to ascetic discipline. . . . Appoint over him one of your number<sup>2</sup> whom he may select to be his trainer, training him nobly and making him by his constant and blessed care a tried wrestler, wounding and overthrowing the prince of the darkness of this world."<sup>3</sup>

Many souls, perhaps more commonly among men than among women, have a poetical and sentimental idea of the Religious Life. Woe betide the man who is permitted to enter the Religious State with this notion ! Naught but the bitterest failure awaits him, unless some extraordinary grace of God enables him to weather the storm that will surely fall upon him.

It is the duty of the Novice Master to show that the Religious Life is rigorous and austere, not a refuge for sentimental souls, but a stern citadel where strong, rugged hearts are set to fight. He must leave nothing undone to make this clear to aspirants, not only by his words, but by the stern and loving discipline to which he is in duty bound to subject them. Let him try their patience, let him prove their humility, let him test their wills. If they are unable to endure,

<sup>1</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 58.

<sup>2</sup> "A man rich in virtues," is the description St. Basil gives of the Novice Master in his sermon *De Renunciatione Saeculi*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> St. Basil, *Epis.* xxiii.

the sooner they depart the better for all concerned. If they meet the test with undaunted hearts, the gold will be all the purer that the furnace was heated one seven times more than it was wont to be heated.

## XII. *Of the Qualities of the Master of Novices*

The following summary may be made of the qualities that should mark the good Master of Novices.

He must be a man of zeal, tempered by a discretion which will check any impulse to hasty judgment or action. He must have a quick and deep sympathy, but governed by such firmness and courage as will make weakness in dealing with others impossible. He must emulate the surgeon who does not hesitate to inflict the fiercest pain to save his patient ; for herein lies truest love. He must be one who has stability of mind and method ; a man who has a clear and reasoned spiritual policy, and who keeps his centre. He must understand character and be able to distinguish real attributes of goodness and earnestness from superficial appearances. He must combine boundless faith in the possibilities of human nature with an ability to see the good hidden beneath much that is bad, and he must have a gift for managing souls so as to bring out the good that is in them, and often save them from themselves. This involves, as a matter of course, a rare gift of tact, which after all is but another name for common sense joined to a warm-hearted love for one's fellow-man. His must be a patient and quiet spirit, long-suffering and kind, who, after seeing the good that might be developed

in a soul, does not easily lose hope of its being brought to fruition. In short, those who are set in this important post should lead their novices on, and cherish them "with love more than maternal." They "ought to be not only discreet, meek and devout, but even devotion, meekness and wisdom itself."<sup>1</sup>

The external work of the Novice Master requires that he have a faculty for detail balanced by a gift of comprehensiveness. Above all, he must be of an unworldly temperament. He who would yield under any circumstances to the temptation to ask, "What will men say?" is not the man to train souls in the way of perfection; for, as St. Jerome says, "It is a monk's first virtue to despise the judgments of men, and always to remember the Apostle's words,<sup>2</sup> 'If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.'"<sup>3</sup>

This does not mean that the Master of Novices must be a genius, but he "ought to be of a humble, generous, noble, and universal spirit," in order to inspire those whom he is directing "with a powerful, courageous, exalted and universal devotion."<sup>4</sup> He who lacks conspicuously any one of the qualities described above should not be set to train men for Religion.

If the various qualities necessary to this office were expressed in a single word, this word would be *balance*. Let a community choose the best-balanced man in it

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, xxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Galatians i. 10.

<sup>3</sup> St. Jerome, *Ep.* lxvi, *ad Pammachium*. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxii, col. 642.

<sup>4</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, xxxiii.

to guide the first steps of aspirants towards perfection, and its future will be well secured.

### XIII. *Of Election to Profession*

The method of electing members is arranged by various communities according to their several Constitutions. After an election, the result, whatever it may be, may be reconsidered at any time previous to Profession if the community wish to do so.

The greatest care should be exercised by Superiors lest, even unconsciously, they influence such an election unduly. The members of the community who have votes in the chapter must be allowed the fullest freedom for the expression of their wish, and any undue influence would invalidate the election. This right of freedom in elections seems to go back to the earliest days of organized community life.<sup>1</sup>

Novices of the same rank take precedence in the novitiate in the order in which they were given the habit, and the same rule governs the order of profession when several are professed at the same time. Those who received the habit first, even if it was but a few minutes earlier, are the first to complete the period of novitiate, and should therefore be professed first. St. Francis de Sales, in a conference given to the Sisters of the Visitation, instructing them how to give their votes in the election of members, sums up for them the characteristics of the good novice worthy to be elected to profession :—

“ A good vocation,” he says, “ is nothing else than the firm and constant will of the person called to

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Brevius*, 112.



serve God in the manner and in the place to which His Divine Majesty calls her ; and that is the best sign we can have by which to judge if a vocation is good. But, observe, that when I say a firm and constant will to serve God, I do not say that she must do from the beginning all that has to be done in her vocation with such firmness and constancy as to be exempt from all repugnance, difficulty or disgust in what concerns it. No, I do not say that, and still less that her firmness and constancy must be such as to render her exempt from faults ; nor that she must be so firm as never to waver nor vary in her determination to practise the means that may lead her to perfection. . . . It is not, then, by these various emotions and sentiments that we must judge of the firmness and constancy of the will in the good resolutions that have once been made ; but by the will remaining firm amidst this variety of different impulses, not quitting the good course it has embraced, though it may feel disgust, or diminution in the love of some virtue, and by its not on that account ceasing to make use of the means that are marked out for acquiring it. So that to have the signs of a good vocation, a sensible constancy is not required, but one that is effective and in the superior part of the soul.”<sup>1</sup>

#### XIV. *Of the Dowry*

It has been a custom with communities for women that those who come to Religion bring with them a certain sum of money, enough at least to pay for the

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, xvii, pp. 262-3.

cost of their maintenance during their postulancy and novitiate. Few, if any, communities, however, would make this a *sine qua non* for admission. This custom is a just one, as it is but fair that the aspirant should not be a burden on the community during the period when she is free to leave without having made any contribution to its life and work.

A community well-endowed, or one which has a good income from alms, or from the labours of its members, might be guilty of simony should it reject an aspirant solely because she could bring nothing in the way of money with her. Such a community, for the honour of God in Religion, should be willing to receive and support a promising aspirant as an act of charity.

If an aspirant brings a dowry to the community when she enters the novitiate, and leaves before profession, it should be returned, minus the amount expended for her support while she was a novice. In case of death before profession it should be returned to her heirs-at-law. St. Francis de Sales discreetly enjoined upon his Sisters that a list should be made of whatever the novices brought to the monastery with them, which inventory was to be signed by the Superior and by the novice.<sup>1</sup> This might in certain cases prevent misunderstanding should a novice leave before profession.

If a Religious after profession leaves the community, either by her own act or by expulsion for cause, she cannot claim the return of any goods she may have brought with her. In countries where there

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, xxxvi.

is no recognition by the civil law of the effects of Religious Profession in relation to property, these ends should be secured in such a way as would be legally binding.<sup>1</sup>

Anciently, a novice was not allowed to bring anything to the monastery in the way of property. Says Cassian: "They do not agree to take from him money to be used even for the good of the monastery, lest he be puffed up with arrogance owing to this offering, and so not deign to put himself on a level with the poorer brethren."<sup>2</sup>

In later times, it became customary for ruling families to send their daughters who were unprovided for into convents, and for this privilege they were accustomed to pay certain sums to the community. As a reaction against this simoniacal practice there were repeated enactments in the middle ages against requiring any pecuniary consideration whatever for the admission of novices. A council of Westminster, in 1127, another at London in 1175, and a third at Westminster in 1200 forbade under anathema the demanding of anything for the reception of Religious. The Constitutions of Langton in 1222 repeated the

<sup>1</sup> On June 22nd, 1914, in the case of *Steinhauser versus The Order of St. Benedict of New Jersey*, a decision of great importance was rendered by the Supreme Court of the United States. The decree declares that the renunciation of property and of the right to hold property, which is made in profession, constitutes a legal contract between a Religious and his Order. According to this decree, although he held title to property in his own name, and administered it at his own discretion, it would, nevertheless, in virtue of his profession, be regarded as belonging to his community, and his heirs-at-law would have no claim upon it.

<sup>2</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, iv, 4. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 156-7.

prohibition.<sup>1</sup> These canons do not, however, forbid a community receiving a dowry under proper conditions.

<sup>1</sup> See Reichel, *Manual of Canon Law*, Vol. ii, p. 103.



## CHAPTER VII

### RELIGIOUS PROFESSION

#### I. *Of the Substance of Profession*

RELIGIOUS Profession is that act whereby one takes upon himself, formally, publicly, and permanently, the obligations of the Religious State. It is this act that makes him a Religious. Before it he may have lived the Life of the Counsels, he may have advanced far along the way of perfection, but he was not a Religious.

The substance of Religious Profession consists of three things :—

1. The donation and delivery of himself to his community.
2. The acceptance of this donation by the community.
3. The taking explicitly or implicitly the three vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience for life.

These are the substance of the Religious Life and are therefore the substance of Religious Profession. If any one of them is wanting, or finds place only in an imperfect way, there is no Religious Profession, and therefore no Religious State is entered upon.

1. By the donation and delivery of himself to his community at profession one transfers to the community not only his person but all his goods and all his rights so far as it is morally possible for such a transfer to be made. He definitely abrogates every right, temporal, moral, and spiritual, save the rights of conscience.

Since the relations of a Religious to his Order regarding matters of property are recognized by the civil authorities only in a few parts of the world,<sup>1</sup> the Constitutions of Religious Orders generally specify how property affairs are to be dealt with. Each Religious is, of course, bound by the terms of the Constitutions of the community to which he gives himself. Some communities provide that a man may dispose of his property at his own discretion before profession. That is, he may give it to the community, or to others ; but before being professed he must make such disposition of it as will put it wholly out of his possession so that he will no longer have any dominion over it.

This subject will be dealt with further when we come to consider the obligations and disabilities incurred by the vow of poverty. Suffice it to say now that his donation of himself to his community, with all his rights, takes away from him any inherent dominion over himself or his goods. This donation of himself to the Order is generally explicitly stated in the formal instrument of profession.

2. Not only must a man give himself to the community in which he is professed, but the community

<sup>1</sup> See note 1 on p. 120.

must accept this donation and delivery in order to complete the contract that is constituted in Religious Profession ; for while the chief relation constituted by profession is that between the soul and God, it is at the same time a definite human contract which must be entered into in order to give the Religious the opportunity to maintain his relation to God in the actual exercises of Religion.

The community does not accept the professed as a gratuitous donation, but by professing him enters into a binding contract with him.<sup>1</sup> He agrees to yield up himself and his rights to the community, while, on its part, it contracts to keep him, to support him, and to train him.

Moreover, the community binds itself to govern him, that is to say, it binds itself to give him good and sufficient opportunity to live the Religious Life, this being the chief end of his entrance into Religion and into this particular community. Therefore, a community that permits laxity to creep in amongst its members, which does not hold them to the requirements of their vows, is violating the contract it made with them at their profession.

3. The three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience are of the essence of the Religious Life, and are therefore necessary to Religious Profession, since no one who has not professed these vows as a life obligation, either explicitly or implicitly, is a Religious in any true sense.

By *explicit* taking of these vows is meant the

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil speaks of the Religious as being "mutually professed."  
—*Reg. Fus. Tract.*, 36.

definite mention of them in the form of profession. By *implicit* is meant when the counsel may not be named, but is clearly implied in the contract ; as, for example, when the Benedictine monk takes vows of stability, conversion of life, and obedience. There is no mention of poverty and chastity, but the vow of obedience to the Holy Rule implies clearly and beyond all doubt that one is binding himself to a perpetual state of poverty and chastity. The same is true of most of the older Orders, as *e.g.*, the Dominicans, who take only a vow of obedience, which includes all other obligations.<sup>1</sup>

Anciently, the vows of poverty and chastity were always taken implicitly. The first explicit mention of them does not appear until 1260, in the Constitutions of Narbonne, promulgated for the Friars Minor in that year by St. Bonaventura.<sup>2</sup>

## II. *Of the Validity of Profession*

Religious Profession, in order to place one in the state of Religion, must be *valid*. The impediments to valid profession are the same as those that we have discussed as impediments to entrance into Religion.

There are also certain requirements regarding the act of profession which are necessary to make the act valid.

1. It must be in some real sense an external, formal act. This is necessary in order to constitute a human

<sup>1</sup> *Constitutiones Fratrum S. Ord. Praed.*, pp. 151 and 184 (Paris Ed., 1886).

<sup>2</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopædia*, Art. "Profession."



contract. Interior consent alone does not constitute a proper contract between men. There must be some outward formality, some declaration and sign of the mutual agreement.

The explicit expression of this agreement is ordinarily required only from the person making profession. The acceptance of his profession in the community by its proper authorities is sufficient to bind the community. It suffices to express this agreement by word of mouth, or by any other generally understood external sign ; *e.g.*, as might be employed by a dumb person.

A more formal expression, however, is generally demanded. The Rule of St. Benedict required this to be a written instrument. " Let him who is to be received make, before all in the Oratory, a promise of stability, conversion of life, and obedience, in the presence of God and of His Saints, so that if he should ever act otherwise he may know that he will be condemned by Him whom he mocketh. Let him draw up this promise in writing, in the name of the Saints whose relics are in the altar, and of the Abbot there present. And let him write it with his own hand ; or at least, if he knoweth not how, let another write it at his request, and let the Novice put his mark to it and place it with his own hand upon the altar."<sup>1</sup>

In many communities this practice is followed, the instrument of profession being signed in the presence of witnesses and preserved in the archives of the Order.

While not required as necessary for validity, there

<sup>1</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 58.

should be witnesses to every profession. A clandestine profession is analogous to a clandestine marriage. The Religious Life is a state recognized by the Church, and by all right-minded Christians, as involving certain privileges and responsibilities, and there should always be formal evidence of the fact to which reference can be made.

2. In order to be valid, Religious Profession must be made in some Religious community. The Religious Life is not ordinarily recognized as existing outside of definitely organized communities. A novice must therefore, expressly or tacitly, make his profession in some community, and it is with such that the contract is made.

3. Profession to be valid must be unconditional. It cannot be made dependent on some future contingency. This would constitute nothing more than a promise, analogous to a betrothal before marriage. Even if the condition named in such a so-called profession were fulfilled, this would not validate the act, but a new profession would be necessary. This is clear, because a conditional donation of oneself is no real donation at all. By such an act one does not abdicate his rights over himself, as must be done absolutely in order to the validity of profession. It is of the substance of profession that the act take full and final effect at once.

4. Free consent is necessary to valid profession, both on the part of the novice and of the community. The employment of fear or undue persuasion to force consent against the will would invalidate a profession. Generally speaking, the same causes regarding free

consent that would invalidate matrimony would invalidate profession in Religion.

5. The employment of fraud to induce consent invalidates profession. If one were induced or allowed to believe the obligations of the vows to be other than they are, as for example, that poverty would not require really giving up his property, or that obedience would still allow the following of his own will, profession made under these circumstances would not hold, for this would subvert the *substance* of Religion.

Fraud that affects only the *accidentals* of Religion does not invalidate. That is, if one, for example, were deceived as to the method of saying the Divine Office, or in regard to the particular work which he would be called on to perform, such fraud would not invalidate.

6. Ignorance or error in regard to the *substance* of Religion may invalidate profession. This would have to be such as would produce a real defect in the consent given at profession. Ignorance of mere details concerning the community or of the manner of practising and enforcing the principles of Religion would not have this effect.

As is the case with other human contracts, valid profession may be made by proxy, or by letter, unless this be forbidden by the Constitutions of the community. This is an unusual procedure, however, and for manifest reasons of fitness, etc., is rarely resorted to.

All that has been said above concerning profession and the circumstances that make for validity apply to the community as well as to the individual. If the

community be induced to profess an aspirant by fear, or fraud, or through ignorance or error, the profession is equally invalid, and it would not be required to retain one so professed. In all points the community is to be regarded as a party to a contract, and cannot be bound when the consent and agreement are not based upon right principles of freedom, knowledge, etc. As in the case of the individual, however, fraud or ignorance cannot be pleaded to invalidate the profession unless in some way it affect that which is of the *substance* of the Religious Life.

An invalid profession is analogous to an invalid marriage, in that it cannot be validated prescriptively as by lapse of time. If it is invalid, it is null, and in order to place the person in the Religious State, a regular formal profession must be made, just as if there had never been any supposed profession whatever. In order to avoid misunderstanding and possible scandal, however, such a profession should be made without any more publicity than is essential to its technical validity.

In order to such a profession the person must have complied with all the requirements of the novitiate. If these were met before the invalid profession was made, nothing more need be demanded. If not, it is sufficient to persevere in the community for the length of time provided for the novitiate, beginning from the time when the nullity of the previous profession became known.

It is not necessary in such cases, however, for the ordinary exercises and discipline of the novitiate to be repeated, as these are not of the substance of



noviceship, and the subject can be supposed to have received through his life in the community the training which such exercises are designed to give.

It is not necessary for the community to go through the formality of another election unless the invalidating cause has to do with the legality of the previous election.

One invalidly professed is not bound to make further profession. As his profession was void he has the same right of departure from the community as he had while in the novitiate, and the community has the same right of sending him away. Neither party is in any way bound any more than they would be by the terms of any other contract that was found to be void.

If, however, under the binding direction of his conscience, one has been living in what he supposed to be the Religious Life, he may be bound still to follow the dictates of conscience, and to make good the defect in his profession. This must be decided as any other moral question would be, *in foro conscientiae*.

In all such cases, however, grave consideration must be given both by the individual and by the community, to the question of scandal. No one has a right to use his freedom in such a way as to give scandal. "All things are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient"; "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth."<sup>1</sup> These apostolic principles which govern our consciences in other relations, bind in respect to an invalid profession. It may be a grave hurt to souls

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians x. 23, and viii. 13.

to see one who had for years lived as a Religious abandon the life merely because it has transpired that there was a technical invalidating defect in his act of profession. No one has a right to use his freedom in such wise as to injure souls. The question, should it present itself, ought not to be decided without taking serious counsel, and seeking God's guidance ; but at the same time it should be adjudged without permitting scruples to enter. He who follows his conscience, having sought counsel of wiser men, need have no fear.

If a profession is proved to be invalid, all its supposed effects are void, and all previous obligations that would have been extinguished by vows revive, until the defect be remedied.

When a profession has been effected through deception or fraud, or through fear, exercised by either party, it may involve questions of restitution if injury has been done on either side in matters of property.

When the profession is doubtful, the benefit of the doubt is to be given in favour of its validity. The subject has made a donation of himself and the community is in actual possession. The principle of law therefore holds that he who is in possession cannot be dispossessed without positive and undoubted evidence that his claim is untenable.

### III. *Of Tacit Profession*

In former times what was known as *tacit* profession was considered as valid. This was quite generally held in the first three centuries. And Constitution 18

of Archbishop Peckham, in 1281, declared that those who had led the Regular Life, wearing the habit for more than a year, were to be regarded as *ipso facto* professed, and should they abandon the community they were to be treated as apostates.<sup>1</sup> Canon law formerly held that if it was tacitly made by taking the habit, which was given only to those professing, it did not pledge the recipient especially to that Order to which the habit belonged, but generally to some form of Religion, *i.e.*, supposing him to be of sufficient age, to have assumed it knowingly and voluntarily, and to have continued to wear it three years.<sup>2</sup>

We only mention *tacit* profession as a matter of historical interest. It no longer obtains in any form or sense amongst us, although it was not formally abolished in the West until 1858.

#### IV. *Of the Effects of Profession*

Certain effects arise from Religious Profession.

1. It has been held by many that Religious Profession has in some sort a sacramental effect. St. Jerome says<sup>3</sup> that to enter upon a monk's life is "to renew one's baptism by means of the vow." St. Dionysius<sup>4</sup> calls the monastic consecration or profession a sacrament (*μυστήριον*). When we consider what is involved in Religious Profession, that it means

<sup>1</sup> Johnson, *English Canons*, Vol. ii, p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> Reichel, *Manual of Canon Law*, Vol. ii, 102 ; note 135.


<sup>3</sup> St. Jerome, *Ep.* xxxix, *ad Paulam*, 3. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxii, col. 468.

<sup>4</sup> St. Dionysius, *De Eccles. Hier.* cap. vi, sec. 3.

a total surrender for all time of the will to God, it is not possible to consider it as other than among the greatest occasions of grace open to the soul. St. Thomas considers Religious Profession as an act so meritorious as to secure the remission of all sins, in some such way as sins are remitted by alms-giving ; for in the one case one gives up for love of God a portion of what one possesses, while in the other he dedicates to God absolutely and perpetually not only all that he has, but all that he is, body, soul, and spirit.<sup>1</sup>

2. Religious Profession does away with all obligations incurred by previous vows. St. Thomas gives four reasons for this<sup>2</sup> :—

(a) Because, while all other vows pertain to particular works, man in Religion dedicates his entire being to the worship of God ; and the particular is included in the universal.

 (b) Because by Religious Profession one renounces his secular life and its obligations. If he cannot renounce these he is not a proper subject for Profession.

(c) Because private and individual practices are not fitting in the Religious Life, and are contrary to the community spirit.

(d) Because the burden of Religion is heavy enough in itself, and one is not bound to add to it.

Such promises or obligations are not said to be suspended or abrogated. They are commuted into something better, and in fulfilling a Religious voca-

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 189, Art. 3 ad 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Q. 88, Art. 12 ad 1.



tion one does fulfil in spirit, though not in letter, all such obligations that have previously been incurred.

When one takes a vow to do certain things for God's service, or to keep the Rule of a certain Guild or Society, or to fulfil a certain condition of life, as, for example, that of a deaconess, such vows or promises are taken with the tacit understanding that they are not to bar the way to a higher state of service in the Kingdom of God, should one be called thereto. To assume a vow with the intention of permitting it, should the occasion arise, to hinder something that was of greater good, could with difficulty be excused from being a sinful act.<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas, as we have seen, holds that all previous vows or promises are commuted by Religious Profession. There is some difference of opinion, however, amongst doctors, concerning previous obligations the fulfilment of which would in no way conflict with duties of Religion. Gautrelet sums up what seems to be the best opinion when he says that such renunciation of the former obligations requires a *positive* act either on the part of him who made the vow, and is free to commute it into something better, or "on the part of the Superior who, by virtue of the power over the Religious which he acquires by Profession, can annul the vow which the Religious had formerly made. Although there are reasons and authorities pro and con, it is the latter opinion that should be followed in practice, says Suarez, and consequently one who

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 10.

makes the vows should take precautions in regard to this matter."<sup>1</sup>

The exception to this principle is found in cases where the non-fulfilment of the first vow would work an injury to another. If the vow induces an obligation that is in the nature of a debt, this debt must be discharged, or arranged for, before one can enter Religion. In this case, the same obligation lies upon one as binds when ordinary debts are involved.

Should one abandon Religion, from whatsoever cause, all previous obligations that had been thus commuted would immediately recover their former force.<sup>2</sup>

#### V. *Of the Binding Force of Profession*

The vows of Religious Profession are irrevocable on the part of him who makes them. Such an one, of his own will, can never recover his liberty, for he has made a donation and delivery of himself to his community, and has no longer any dominion over, or right in, himself. It is on this principle that one who has taken vows for a term of years only, and so at the end of that time can withdraw himself, cannot be said to be a Religious in any true sense.

The community, as the other contracting party, is equally bound, and cannot free a Religious from his state, or dismiss him, except for just cause, or as a matter of discipline exercised in the discharge of the authority it has over him. This important subject

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 123.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

we have discussed in our consideration of the termination of the obligation of Religious vows in a former chapter.

Not even by mutual agreement between a Religious and his community can the Religious obligation be vacated. The community accepts its members for God chiefly, and for itself only ministerially, and it has no power to free them from their obligation, since this obligation is clearly of divine and not of ecclesiastical institution. "The right which has been acquired by the Order is not a proper and rigorous dominion ordained for its own private benefit, but rather a dominion which has been ordained for the good of the Religious himself and for the service of God."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Suarez, *The Religious State*, Vol. i, 255-6 (Humphrey's Digest).

## CHAPTER VIII

### RELIGIOUS POVERTY

#### I. *Of the Vow of Poverty, Its Principle and Application*

THE state of poverty upon which one enters by his Religious vows is ordinarily a renunciation of all temporal things so far as the exercise of personal dominion over, or proprietorship in them is concerned ; and so far as concerns their use, independent of the will of a Superior.

The exact application of the principles of poverty is limited and governed for the individual Religious by the particular Rule and Constitutions of his community, or by the vows he has taken. What is said in this chapter must be interpreted for each community in the light of its own Rule, for no Religious is bound further than is intended by his Rule, or implied in his vow.

Three degrees of poverty are to be found in Religion. "The first degree by taking away the *radical power* of possession consequently interdicts all exercise of ownership. Thus dominion, administration, use, acquisition and disposition are all



forbidden to those who have made the vow of poverty in this sense. The second degree, while allowing this *radical power* to remain, takes away everything else. The third degree, permitting ownership, merely forbids the use, administration, and free disposal, according to the different senses attached to it in different Orders.”<sup>1</sup>

In the early days of monasticism no poverty was contemplated but that of the first degree. The modifications involved in the other degrees of poverty were the results of the concessions made in later and laxer times. We find this degree of poverty taken for granted in all the early writers on monasticism, and St. Benedict incorporates this principle in his Rule.

Where, however, no limitations are given concerning poverty in the Rule or Constitutions of a community, the principles involved in the first degree of poverty which are set forth below are binding upon Religious in general. For “if the vow was made without reservation, without restriction, in an absolute manner, and he disposed in general of all that he could then possess or receive later, the Religious cannot then retain anything without sin. He can make no reservation, no agreement by virtue of which he would retain any such right or expectation ; he can keep nothing as his own.”<sup>2</sup>

The obligation of actual poverty that lies upon the individual Religious does not lie upon the community unless, as is the case with some Orders, it is bound

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 214.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

by its Constitutions and Rule not to exercise actual ownership.

The ideal which most communities set for themselves is that of the Apostolic Church at Jerusalem. There was a holding of properties ; but “ neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.”<sup>1</sup>

In order to live their life Religious must have the necessary food, clothing, and a roof to shelter them. If they are to work for their own support, lands and buildings are necessary. Above all, if they are going to conduct works of charity, they must maintain their institutions; and consequently many material things are requisite.

Therefore, ordinarily, Religious poverty does not apply to the community, but to the individual only. None of them can say that aught is his own, but they have all things in common. It is the individual, not the community, that takes the vow of poverty and is bound thereby.

Much Church legislation has been enacted on the subject of poverty, and during the Middle Ages it was greatly involved by its relation to civil law which no longer exists in any part of the West. We must, therefore, go back to the earlier history of Religion to find the essentials by which Religious amongst us are to-day to be bound.<sup>2</sup>

A study of the Fathers and other early writers of

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 32.

<sup>2</sup> The whole of the Fourth and Seventh Books of Cassian's *Institutes* should be read. The translation by Edgar C. S. Gibson, now Bishop of Gloucester, in the *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* is recommended.

the Church discovers the principles which we purpose setting forth as binding upon those who have taken an unqualified vow of poverty.

So rigid was the rule of poverty in the early monastic communities that Cassian informs us "that no one ventures to say even in word that anything is his own; and it is a great offence if there doth pass the mouth of a monk such an expression as 'my book,' 'my tablets,' 'my pen,' 'my coat,' 'my shoes'; and for this he would have to make satisfaction by a proper penance, if by accident some such expression escaped his lips through thoughtlessness or ignorance."<sup>1</sup> All things were held in common, as the Abbot Abraham taught: "Monks alone maintain a lasting union in intimacy, and possess all things in common, as they hold that everything that belongs to their brethren is their own, and that everything which is their own is their brethren's."<sup>2</sup> St. Benedict, more than a century later, is quite explicit: "Let no one presume," he says, "without the leave of the Abbot, to give, or receive, or hold, as his own, anything whatsoever, either book, or tablets, or pen, or anything at all; because they are men whose very bodies and wills are not in their own power. . . . Let all things be common to all."<sup>3</sup>

It is clear that the obligation incurred by the vow

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, Lib. iv, cap. xiii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 169. *The Augustinian Observances of Barnwell Priory* gave the same direction: "He is not to call anything mine, or my own, but ours."—Clark, p. 223. So also St. Basil (A.D. 360): "The Scripture forbiddeth us to say mine and thine among the brethren."—*Reg. Fus. Tract.*, 32.

<sup>2</sup> Cassian, *Conferences*, xxiv, 26. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 1323.

<sup>3</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, 33.

of poverty extends only to temporal things, that is to say, to things which can be bought with money, or that have a moral equivalent in money. It does not involve spiritual things, and the Religious does not renounce his dominion over these. That is to say, he retains his right over prayers, intercessions, etc., that he may choose to make ; and over the intentions of his Mass and Offices, provided these are not directed under obedience.

A Religious cannot have or acquire any temporal thing in his own name or right so as to have personal dominion over it. Neither can he have the right of *use* in any temporal goods, without permission. “ *Use* is something of money value ; it is therefore an object of the vow.”<sup>1</sup>

By his profession he becomes incapable in the court of conscience of such possession or acquisition.<sup>2</sup> Gautrelet describes this as “ the highest degree of the vow of poverty.”<sup>3</sup> The force of this might be illustrated by saying that if one should steal property from a Religious, he would not be bound in conscience to make personal restitution to the individual from whom it was taken, except as that individual may be the agent of his community or of some other for whom he was administering the property so stolen. It is held that one who receives a gift from a Religious, made without permission, is bound to make restitution to the community, on the same principle that requires a receiver of stolen goods to make restitution to the rightful owner.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 213.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*    <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 253.



Gautrelet, commenting on the vow of poverty, says: "The Religious, not content with depriving himself of the goods that he possesses, and of those that he might one day acquire, despoiling himself of what he has and what he might have, deprives himself of the very power of possession and acquirement. Not content to give the fruits, or even to cut off the branches and stem, he pulls up the roots that might produce new stems."<sup>1</sup> It is as Cassian tells us it was with the Religious of the primitive Church, not only do they give up all, but they are "*vowed utterly to forsake them*," which obligation is in no sense fulfilled by him who maintains rights of ownership or disposition of property, independently of his Superior's will.

A Religious cannot use or retain any temporal things whatsoever without the express or implied permission of his Superior, and he must be ready and prompt in will and act to give up at any time those things that he may be holding or using through such permission.

In order for a sin against the vow of poverty to be grave, the matter must be grave, and the knowledge and consent full and deliberate, as is the case with other sins.

## II. *Of Ownership and Permissions*

Only an act of ownership can violate the vow of poverty. It is necessary then for us to inquire particularly what constitutes an act of ownership.

Ownership is the power of disposing freely and

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 253.

independently of an object, using it, giving it, alienating it at one's will. This free and independent use of things is what is called an act of ownership, an act whereby a person disposes of an object as its possessor, as absolute master, independently of the will of others, and consequently in Religion, independently of the will of his Superior, and without permission obtained from legitimate authority.

The presence of permission entirely neutralizes all ownership, for in that case it is the Superior acting through the subject, who is therefore the former's agent, and no longer acts independently. Therefore no ownership is exercised.

"One sins against the vow of poverty every time he acts as master without dependence and without permission in the disposal of things which are of the matter of the vow he has made."<sup>1</sup> This quotation from Gautrelet sums up what the exercise of independent ownership means. It also reminds us of what we must constantly keep in mind, that the obligation of poverty depends for its extent and application upon the terms of the particular vow that has been taken, and on the provisions of the particular Rule and Constitutions we have vowed to observe.

It is the permission of the proper authority that establishes that subordination of the subject to the will of the Superior which renders it safe for one to deal with temporal goods without running the risk of exercising ownership. It is the absence of this permission that gives independence to such dealing, and constitutes an exercise of ownership. It is, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 217.

of grave importance to the Religious to know the conditions of lawful permission under which he can safely act. Otherwise, he might easily, through ignorance, exercise that ownership which would be an offence against his vow of poverty.

Permission in its form may be *express*, *tacit*, or *presumed*. In its essence it may be *just* or *unjust*, and *valid* or *invalid*.

### III. *Of Permission Express, Tacit, or Presumed*

Permission is express when by a formal act, as by word or writing, a Superior permits a certain act or course. "By such permission the Superior approves the action of his subject, adopts it and makes it his own,"<sup>1</sup> and the inferior becomes an agent only, the Superior being responsible for what is done.

Permission is tacit when it is included in an express permission. For example, an express permission to accomplish a certain end carries with it the tacit permission to use the ordinary means necessary for reaching that end. If a Superior gives an express permission to make a journey, he tacitly gives permission to expend the money required for the railway fare.

Again, express permission to perform some complex action carries with it tacit permission to do all subsidiary things that are involved.

Again, if one has express permission to keep certain articles for his use, he thereby receives tacit permission to use his judgment as to the time and circumstances of their use.

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 218.

A Superior who is a witness to the action of a subject and makes no objection when it could easily be interposed, is assumed to give thereby tacit permission.

While the acceptance of tacit permission must, from the nature of things, be frequent, subjects must exercise great care and conscientiousness in every case. The too free use of it may easily lead to laxity in an individual and throughout a community. One is safe in assuming tacit permission only when he conscientiously believes that the Superior will approve and adopts as his own the act he is performing. He must believe *ex animo* that he is doing the will of the Superior in the matter.

Permission is presumed, when a Religious, his Superior being absent, believing he must act without waiting to secure express permission, does what he thinks his Superior would tell him to do were he present. Acting on such presumption is not a violation of his vow since he is acting not according to his own will, but subordinates himself to what he conscientiously believes to be the will of his Superior, a will that would be expressed were he present.

While these various forms of permission are usually considered in particular relation to the vow of poverty, it must be remembered that they also affect in many cases the vow of obedience.

One should under no circumstances assume permission *habitually*; it would be almost certainly a violation of the virtue, if not of the vow of obedience, for one to assume permission frequently in the same matter without referring it as soon afterwards as



possible to the Superior for confirmation. It is best always, in order to shield the obligation of obedience, to report without delay to the Superior what one has done. By doing this one has the opportunity of studying the mind of his Superior, and of learning how far he can go on future occasions in assuming permission when the matter is doubtful.

#### IV. *Of the Justice of Permissions*

Certain conditions also affect the essence of a permission.

An *unjust* permission is one given by a Superior within the limits of the actual authority committed to him by the community, but in which he acts wrongly or imprudently.

Sometimes a Superior grants an improper permission from a spirit of laxity ; or yields to a subject who asks some such boon because he knows from past experience that he will make himself highly unpleasant if it is refused ; or he grants a permission through fear or favour. In all these cases the permission is known as *unjust*. The subject in acting on such a permission is not violating the vow of poverty, because he is acting with the knowledge and consent of the Superior ; and though the latter may be acting imprudently and improperly, he is still within the limits of the authority entrusted to him by the Constitutions of his community.

If such permission involve, however, a serious relaxation, the subject, unless it be laid on him in obedience, should not avail himself of it. All well regulated Religious Constitutions provide some way

in which to restrain a Superior who habitually gives permissions or directions that tend to general relaxation.

### V. *Of the Validity of Permissions*

Permission is *invalid* (a) when the Superior exceeds the bounds of the authority the Constitutions suppose him to exercise ; for instance, if he should give a permission which would be tantamount to an indefinite suspension of a subject's obligation of poverty ; or if he gave permission to dispose of goods, the alienation of which was reserved to the Chapter.

(b) A permission is invalid, and cannot without sin be acted upon, if it is obtained by fraud or deception ; or because one has been silent concerning circumstances that the Superior ought to know, and which, had he known them, would have caused him to refuse the desired permission. This is necessarily true because the permission is supposed to proceed from the will of the Superior, and if the circumstances are such that his will is not moving freely and intelligently, that which it directs will be null.

(c) Permissions intended to be perpetual and irrevocable are invalid.

Should a Superior unjustly refuse a permission, this does not give the subject the right to act in spite of it. So long as the former acts within the limits of his authority, it is a question of prudence, and prudence in such cases is a virtue that is to be exercised by Superiors, not by subjects.

VI. *Of Violation of Poverty by Acquiring Goods*

Poverty may be violated either by receiving or giving without permission, for both acts would imply the exercise of that dominion which is contrary to the obligation of poverty.<sup>1</sup>

1. The vow of poverty may be violated by the simple act of appropriating any article, or right, for oneself, whether with the intention of holding it as one's own possession or merely to use temporarily. If the sin of theft also enter into such an action it becomes a twofold sin, that of violating the moral law, and that of breaking one's vow. If the article stolen belongs to a Religious house a third sin, that of sacrilege, is added, since thereby things dedicated to the service of God are withdrawn from the holy purpose for which they were devoted.<sup>2</sup>

The act of appropriating goods for oneself in any manner whatsoever is a violation of the vow. It matters little fundamentally whether they are the property of one's community or of an extern ; whether they are found, the owner being known or not ; or whether they are appropriated for one's own use or that of another, or with the intention of assuming actual ownership. The principle of the violation is the same.

2. Deliberately to retain in one's keeping, or in the keeping of another, beyond the permitted period,

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil declares such acts to be " rash and contumacious."—*Reg. Brev.*, 145.

<sup>2</sup> St. Basil, *Reg. Brev.*, 53, declares such withdrawal as " impious, and to be abhorred."

anything for use of which permission had formerly been given, is a violation of the vow.

3. It is a like violation to refrain deliberately from asking a renewal of a permission, actuated by the fear that it may be refused, in the meantime keeping the article.

4. To conceal an article in order to escape the possibility of having it taken from one by a Superior combines a degrading deception with a direct violation of the obligation of poverty. This breach is especially serious, as in such case one not only does not assume permission, but on the contrary acts on the positive assumption that permission would not be given if the matter were known. It is also regarded as contrary to poverty to keep anything under lock and key unless the Superior has ready and direct access to it. Cassian mentions this as regarded among primitive Religious as a practice to be wholly avoided.<sup>1</sup>

5. One would sin against poverty by keeping any article for a notable time without permission. "This might be done in various ways," says Gautrelet.<sup>2</sup> "Thus, one has permission for a limited time and gives no heed to the limit set; one has received or taken something, assuming permission, and retains it without authority from the Superior; one has received or taken without permission, and continues to keep without having this originally faulty possession legitimized. In all these cases one remains independent of the will of the Superior, and consequently sins against the vow, because he performs acts of ownership."

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, Lib. iv, cap. xv. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 170. <sup>2</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 230-31.



6. To accept anything whatsoever, whether from an extern or a member of one's community, for one's personal use or possession, without permission, is a violation of the vow of poverty. This does not apply to gifts received for the community with the intention of turning them over to the proper authority at the first opportunity. In such cases one is not required to remind the donor that he can receive nothing for himself. It is to be taken for granted that those who deal with Religious know the principle *Quidquid acquirit monachus, monasterio acquirit* ; or as Abbot Abraham expressed it in the first days of monasticism : " Everything that belongs to their brethren is their own, and everything that is their own is their brethren's."

If something is given to a Religious and he keeps and conceals it, instead of delivering it to the proper authority, St. Augustine's Rule declares it shall be visited with " such punishment as theft deserves."

This does not apply to things which, according to Rule or custom, are commonly assigned to individuals for their routine work. For example, if one doing kitchen work should run short of some article ordinarily supplied, he could readily assume permission to draw on the supply of a companion in the work until he was able to replenish his stock. On all such points one must, with reasonableness and common sense (without which virtues the Religious Life would be an intolerable burden, vexing souls rather than glorifying God), consult the spirit and usage of his community.

It would not be a sin in cases of ordinary necessity

if one received a thing with the intention of having it authorized, and with an entire willingness to give it up at the direction of the Superior.

7. Buying or borrowing anything without permission even for the use of the community violates poverty. Borrowing even from a member of the community without permission is a violation of poverty, but less serious than would be such dealing with a stranger. One in buying or borrowing would be governed by the same rules of reason and common sense as we saw applied in the case of receiving goods without permission. In all cases one would feel freer to receive or borrow from a member of his community than from an extern.

8. One acts contrary to his vow who spends more than is necessary on a journey. Even when the Superior expects a certain sum to be spent, and provides it, a Religious is bound to use economy to limit the expenditure to necessary things, returning all balance to the proper authority.

9. To accept anything without permission with the understanding that one will personally distribute it in general alms is against poverty. Such a personal work of distribution would be an act of ownership, as he who distributed it would have to decide to whom he would or would not give it. It is not against the obligation of poverty to receive an alms for a particular person or object, as in this case the Religious would act only as an agent in delivering it.<sup>1</sup>

10. It is a violation of poverty to refuse to accept

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 243.

goods offered by externs, either explicitly or implicitly, for the community. To refuse such a donation would be to assume a certain proprietorship which would be against poverty. It would also be an infringement on poverty to presume to discourage one from making a gift or leaving a legacy to one's community.

### VII. *Of Violation of Poverty by Alienating Goods*

To alienate a thing without permission is a direct assumption of dominion over it, which is contrary to the Religious vow. Therefore one can fail in poverty by giving as well as by acquiring.

1. Poverty is violated where one gives or lends anything to another, whether within or without the community, without permission. To give or lend to a member of the community is a less serious breach of poverty, however, as the goods are not thereby alienated from the community which is the lawful owner. In lending articles that are in common use among the Religious, one can safely act in many cases upon a presumed permission. The really conscientious soul that is serving in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, will have no difficulty in steering a right course which will enable him to avoid both scruple and laxity.

2. To sell any article without permission is also a violation of poverty. If one is commissioned by the community to sell anything, he violates poverty if he reduces or increases the price by the exercise of such judgment as his Superior did not intend.

3. To exchange one article for another is contrary to the vow, if done without permission. This is more

serious if the person with whom the exchange is made is not a member of the community, as this alienates the article from the community, its rightful owner, without authority. He who assumes the power to alienate goods thereby assumes the rights of ownership.

4. For a Religious to remit, without permission, a debt legally due to him is a violation of poverty, and an invasion of the property rights of the community. A Religious who has an income or annuity from family estates so entailed, or otherwise secured, that by law it must be paid to him, cannot have dominion over such income after his profession. His donation of himself to the community included all of which he was possessed or might in future receive. Therefore such income belongs to the community, and the subject has no power concerning the disposition of it. This principle may, however, be modified by the Rule and Constitutions of particular communities, and reference must be made to these in each case.

The same holds good in regard to a legacy left a Religious. He has no right to refuse it, or to dispose of it, unless this right is reserved to him by the law of his community, and he sins against poverty should he do so.

5. To lose or injure or waste through carelessness any article assigned him for his use is a violation of poverty.<sup>1</sup> This applies to articles assigned for personal use, such as tools, clothing, books, stationery, etc., as well as to those being used in connection with the office or work given him, such as farm or household

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Brevius*, 143, 144.



supplies, etc. This way of violating the vow of poverty is extremely common, and should be guarded against in every detail by the good Religious. Religious authorities are constant and strong in their warnings against it. An extract from Père Gautrelet is much to the point.

“ It often happens,” he says, “ that one takes less care of the objects he uses in Religion than of those he possessed in the world. The reverse should be true, because in the world one would do no wrong to anyone by his carelessness, because he has the ownership of the objects he might lose, while in Religion he has only the use of them. Moreover, do not the Religious State and the vows one has taken constitute an obligation to practise the virtue of poverty more perfectly than in the world? Such an one lets his clothing deteriorate for lack of care, burns his shoes in winter, etc., who, if he were obliged to bear the expense of them, would look after them more carefully. One often sins against poverty in this matter. *The care that one should have of the objects that he uses in Religion should be the same that a prudent person would have in the world.*”<sup>1</sup>

6. It is likewise a sin against poverty to allow goods entrusted to one's care to be lost or to be injured. A cook who culpably spoils the food ; a housekeeper who allows clothing to be injured through want of care ; one who is entrusted with making purchases, and loses money for the community by not buying with proper diligence, or at the right market—all these are guilty of a breach of poverty

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, 238-9.

more or less grave according to the seriousness of the loss and the degree of culpability involved.

7. It is against poverty for a Religious, passing from one monastery to another, to take with him anything of the goods of the first house, unless it be some article, such as necessary clothing, with which the individual Religious, by the custom of the community, is supposed always to be supplied.

8. When a Superior assigns certain goods for one's use, a Religious cannot without violating poverty presume to apply them to some other use, without the permission of the proper authority.

#### VIII. *Of the Virtue of Poverty*

We have now discussed the vow of Poverty, but we must remember that no external Religious exercise is of worth except in so far as it is the expression of the virtues within. We must, therefore, consider what constitutes the Virtue of Poverty.

Much difficulty will be obviated in understanding the whole subject of the Evangelical Counsels if, before proceeding further, we recall what the word *Virtue* means. It is the transliteration of a Latin word meaning *strength, power*. If I say that at Baptism there was infused into my soul the theological *virtue* of love, I mean simply that I have had infused into me a *Virtus*, a *power* that enables me to love God and my fellow-man.

So it is with the evangelical virtues of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. If these virtues reside in a man, he has, as a gift from God, a moral *power* (or *virtus*) that enables him to exercise poverty ; another

gift the use of which enables him to be chaste ; and still another that enables him to put aside his own will and submit humbly in obedience.

Keeping this in mind, we understand then what we mean when we define the Virtue of Poverty as a power that God imparts to our wills by the use of which we are able to govern and regulate our affection for earthly goods. We may take a vow of poverty, but unless the power and capacity for making ourselves poor in spirit lies behind it, the vow will prove of little avail. " It is less mastery," says Walter Hilton, " to forsake worldly goods than to forsake the love of them."<sup>1</sup>

One who enters upon the life of Religious Poverty not only dispossesses himself of all temporal goods that he may have and binds himself not to enter upon the possession of any such goods in the future ; but, as Cassian says, he " is vowed utterly to forsake them."<sup>2</sup> He binds himself to avoid, so far as in him lies, all interior desire and will to possess them.

This obligation is of the first importance, as it involves the virtue which alone can make the practice of poverty meritorious. " When a thing is prohibited all that leads to it is likewise prohibited ; since from the will one naturally proceeds to the external act, and as in this case the external act is unlawful for the Religious, so also is the internal act."<sup>3</sup> This principle is based on our Lord's teaching in the Gospels concerning the spirit of the Law.

<sup>1</sup> Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, vii, 30. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 321.

<sup>3</sup> Devine, *Convent Life*, pp. 103-4.

Cassian also sets out this principle when he says : " We must not only guard against the *possession* of money, but also must expel from our souls the *desire* for it. For we should not so much avoid the results of covetousness as cut off by the roots all disposition towards it. For it will do no good not to possess money, if there exists in us the desire for getting it."<sup>1</sup>

Since this virtue of poverty is a gift from God, like all His gifts and graces it must be cultivated. We are in fact bound under sin to tend towards its perfection. This is one of the chief obligations of a Religious, since by constantly tending toward perfection in the power of renouncing earthly goods, we tend towards the perfect setting of our hearts on things above.

All virtues and powers, whether of body or soul, are cultivated by definite acts. If I want strength of arm I use in a regular way the strength I have, and it is increased. So if I want to develop the virtue of poverty I do so by practising detachment from the love of those things which are opposed to the spirit of poverty. I must so live and act as to practise my will to give up, without regret, temporal things.

And this must be done with little things. For example, I may have been using a certain pen for a long time, and I feel a sense of disturbance if I am compelled to use another ; or I have grown fond of a certain breviary, and am disturbed if it is taken from me. In such cases my feeling at being deprived of the article shows that I am using the thing in question as though it were my own ; I have a real

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, vii, 21. Migne, P. L., Tom. xlix, col. 313.



sense of possession in regard to it, all of which is a direct violation of the virtue of poverty.

It may be that in none of these things I am violating the *vow* of poverty. I may accept being deprived of them without a word of protest ; and yet by yielding my heart to the desire and regret for them the virtue of poverty may be utterly overthrown. " Unshackled by love of private wealth " is the fine expression St. Augustine uses to describe the freedom of the soul that not only renounces worldly goods but all affection for them.<sup>1</sup>

If our poverty is to be real in the sight of God, if it is to be exercised in that spirit which alone can give life and moral value to an action, we must be constantly cultivating the virtue by definite acts. In short, if the virtue is to be strong, we must work at it steadily.

When I become conscious that I am disturbed when the breviary I use is exchanged for another, I ought to give it up voluntarily if I am permitted to do so by my Superiors. In other words, whenever I realize that I am growing to care for any object, or becoming in any way attached to it, I should immediately ask my Superior, if this be necessary, to take away from me that which is thus proving a snare. In many cases, in the ordinary, small routine of the Religious Life, it is not necessary to ask such permission of a Superior. This would be decided according to the custom of the community, or of the department of work to which we are assigned. Such

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *De Opere Monachorum*, cap. xvi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xl, col. 564.

detailed practice of poverty, despoiling oneself of those things to which the heart is attached, will soon bring about such an indifference to temporal possessions that we shall no longer be enslaved by them.

In some communities the excellent custom prevails of a redistribution from time to time of cells, as well as of all ordinary articles of use. Books, objects of devotion, medals, beads, picture-cards, pens, knives, and all such things as are given out for the personal use of the Religious, are at certain seasons returned to the Superior, who again distributes them. In this way the growth of those foolish and often tenacious attachments so destructive of all true Religious spirit is checked.<sup>1</sup>

The Religious needs to guard against the violation of the virtue of poverty especially in little things, because the temptation to offend in small details is more frequent than in large matters. A man who gives up a great fortune to enter Religion and never for a moment regrets it, may daily sin by yielding to a spirit of attachment regarding some petty tool he is using in his daily work. Rodriguez tells us of the stinging rebuke administered by St. Dorotheus to his pupil Dositheus, who, after giving up many things in the world, by his repining showed himself to be "the slave to a knife" which was taken from him by his Superior;<sup>2</sup> and the Abbot Daniel declares that so far from condoning an attachment to little things,

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales enjoined this practice with great exactness on his Sisters. See *Visitation Constitutions*, chapter v. See also *Constitutiones Fratrum S. Ord. Praedicatorum* (Paris, 1886), p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 151.

"we ought to think a man so far worse if he has made light of great things, and then is a slave to little things."<sup>1</sup>

"Certainly it is a thing very ridiculous and much to be pitied," says Rodriguez, "to see a grave, religious person, who had the courage once to condemn the world, become so strangely fond of trifles as to be as uneasy and troubled at parting with them as a child is when you deny him an apple, or take away its baby."<sup>2</sup>

Let us take care not to become attached to small things, and there will be no danger of serious violation of the virtue of poverty arising, following the principle that mortal sin cannot overtake the man who is ever watchful against venial sin.

### IX. *Of Offences Against the Virtue of Poverty*

Those who have taken such vows of poverty as are common amongst us (that is, a direct vow not to acquire or to exercise ownership or use of any temporal goods whatsoever without permission of the proper Superior), can offend against the virtue of poverty in many ways. Those most commonly pointed out are as follows:—

1. To harbour regrets for the goods that have been renounced, desiring in one's heart to have them again, is a violation of the virtue. Such regrets may, however, arise in the heart as temptations, and there is no guilt unless the will yields to them.

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Conferences*, iv, cap. xxi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 610.

<sup>2</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 148.

2. He who possesses, or uses, even with the permission of a Superior, that which is not needed, offends against the virtue. The permission saves the vow, but if it is unnecessary, the virtue nevertheless suffers. The circumstances of the case and of the person govern the decision as to what is necessary, and a mind tending to scruples would do well to seek guidance frequently.

3. Attachment to the things permitted for one's use is a violation of the virtue of poverty. The insignificance of the article aggravates rather than excuses the fault, for the smaller the article the more unreasonable it is to be attached to it, and the more blameworthy he who has an inordinate love for it. The extent of this attachment may be measured (*a*) by the frequent thought one gives to it ; (*b*) by the pleasure one feels in using it ; (*c*) by the fear caused by the thought of losing it ; and (*d*) by the disturbance one experiences when it is taken from him. St. Gregory says : " As much sorrow as thou hast in losing of a thing, so much love hadst thou in the keeping of it."<sup>1</sup>

4. One who allowed the goods of the community to be lost or injured would offend against the virtue of poverty, even if the goods in question were in no way under his care.

5. He violates the virtue of poverty who is unwilling to put up with the inconveniences incident to the lack of things which are ordinarily necessary. He who would be furthest from such a violation should train himself to rejoice in being stripped of all

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Hilton, *op. cit.*, p. 88.



things, if by any means the work assigned him can be done without them. The inconvenience or even suffering caused by such deprivation should be welcomed as that which makes us more like our Lord in His poverty. The true Religious is never keen to seek the things that may be due to him for the purpose of his work or by the custom of the community. He rather gives thanks to God if he has the opportunity of suffering a deprivation that is uncommon or unusual, believing that God is thereby showing him favour above his brethren.

6. He violates the virtue of poverty who desires earnestly and with affection towards them, those things which are convenient and agreeable in his life or work. This can be tested by the degree of annoyance one feels when they are taken away.

7. It is likewise a sin against the virtue to hold in contempt the things that may be mean and poor. This would indicate a pride that would be utterly destructive of the virtue of being poor in spirit.

8. Carelessness in using the things permitted is an offence against the virtue even though it leads to no injury of the articles in question.

#### X. *Of the Difference between the Vow and the Virtue of Poverty*

The reader has been able, from the preceding sections, to note generally the differentiation between the vow and the virtue of poverty. It will make this more definite if we summarize these points of difference.

1. Permission or dispensation from a lawful Superior ensures the Religious in every instance against the violation of the *vow* of poverty ; but no permission can save one from offence against the *virtue* unless it be in accordance with the requirements of the virtue. A permission may easily represent a relaxation and so be culpable in view of the virtue, although the vow be not affected. A good Religious will therefore be careful not to ask for a permission that would offend the virtue of poverty, as also a good Superior will exercise discretion so as not to give such leave.

2. The vow of poverty has for its object the external renunciation and despoilment of all worldly goods. The virtue of poverty has for its object the detachment of heart from all possible love for worldly goods. The vow of poverty is defined as the *means*, the virtue of poverty as the *end*. We take the vow of poverty in order to attain to the virtue. The virtue is more perfect than the vow, as the end is always to be regarded as more excellent than the means used for its attainment.

3. The virtue of poverty is of broader scope than the vow. It is, in fact, the interior spirit and power, which makes the vow effective. Every violation of the vow is a violation of the virtue of poverty, although one may violate the virtue in many instances, or even habitually, without violating the letter of the vow.

4. The vow, as we have seen, binds only so far as it is intended to do, but the virtue has no limit to its force, but should carry the soul on, not only to the

literal fulfilment of the vow, but to the perfect renunciation of the things of the world.

5. The virtue involves many duties that are obligatory as precepts because of the vow ; but, unlike the vow, it also involves many counsels, that is to say, it can, and is supposed to go beyond the mere precept and to lead the will to a life of far more perfect poverty than would be attained did one stop with the mere external fulfilment of the things to which he was vowed.

6. The relation of the vow to the virtue, however, is such that every offence against the virtue is an attack, direct or indirect, against the vow, for it weakens the principle which secures its observance ; and once weakened the virtue may become so relaxed as not to be able to hold the will up even to the mere literal fulfilment of the terms of the vow. The two are interrelated, and mutually affect each other, as act and habit must ever do. The vow helps us to cultivate the virtue ; while the exercise of the virtue is that which enables us to keep the vow.

### XI. *Of the Peculium*

What is called the *peculium* is anything in the way of money or its equivalent, in the shape of annuity, pension, or alms, etc., that a Religious receives and is allowed to dispose of by right, more or less dependent upon the will of his Superior.

The *peculium* is distinctly the growth of the corruption of later centuries of the Religious Life. It was not uncommon for the family of a Religious to settle upon him an annuity or pension, which, while

it was used under the direction of the Superior in some degree, was not intended for the community, and over which the individual maintained some rights.

Happily, amongst us these corruptions have not crept in. It sometimes happens that one who has entered Religion is the recipient of an income from family estates which must be paid to him by the executor or trustees ; but this is not of the nature of a peculium, for the money goes into the common treasury, and the Religious, if he has taken an unqualified vow of poverty, has no more right in it than any other member of the community. *Quidquid acquirit monachus, monasterio acquirit*, is the principle that binds in this case—whatever the monk acquires, he acquires for the monastery.

We say that the peculium is a corruption of later times, for one has only to read the works of Cassian and others of the Fathers of the Church to see that no such relaxation of poverty was contemplated in their time. St. Basil says, in Chapter 18 of his Rule (quoted by Gautrelet) : “ These are truly Religious who, having nothing of their own, possess all things in common.”

The Rule of St. Benedict, as we have seen, provides that no Religious shall have anything of his own,<sup>1</sup> and that if parents send anything to a Religious he cannot accept it save at the command of the Superior, who will immediately have the right to dispose of it in any way he pleases, without the brother, to whom the present was sent, having any

<sup>1</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 33. \*



right to feel aggrieved.<sup>1</sup> The Rule of the Carmelites also makes the same provision.

The abuse grew up in past centuries protected by technicalities regarding the Superior's right to withdraw the use of the peculium at will. This was, however, the sheerest technicality, and is intolerable to one who seeks the ideals of poverty that obtained in the days of the primitive strength and purity of Holy Religion.

Gautrelet, after discussing the various makeshifts by which this corruption has grown up, concludes, "that the mind and desire of the Church is that, so far as possible, Religious possess absolutely nothing, and remain in this respect in absolute dependence upon their Superior; and that the peculium, although permitted where the custom prevails, offers real dangers to poverty, and that consequently Religious who desire to approach the mind of the Church and the primitive spirit of their Rule, tend to place themselves more and more in dependence upon their Superior in order to depart more and more from the sin of ownership."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 54.

<sup>2</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 272.

## CHAPTER IX

### RELIGIOUS CHASTITY

#### I. *Of the Vow of Chastity*

THE vow of chastity binds the Religious (1) to renounce marriage and everything that in human experience has been shown to be incompatible with or prejudicial to the permanent state and spirit of virginity; and (2) to abstain from every thought, word, and act that would in any way or degree violate the seventh commandment; and this, as will be seen, under pain of sin additional to that of breaking the precept.

We saw, in our consideration of vows in general, that the condition of chastity or virginity has been regarded from Apostolic days as a most meritorious state; and men and women were encouraged to vow themselves to it. We recall St. Justin Martyr's testimony that there were those "out of every nation" who, in the time of the Apostles, took this obligation upon themselves, keeping it inviolate all their lives.<sup>1</sup>

Strictly speaking, the condition of chastity is not incompatible with marriage, for there is a chastity

<sup>1</sup> St. Justin Martyr, I *Apolog.*, xv. Migne, P. G., Tom. vi, col. 349.

within the married state which consists in using the marital rights only within the bounds of duty and righteousness, avoiding excess. It is often forgotten that the purity of the conjugal state requires a certain chastity which excess violates, and those who do not regard this are degrading that holy estate of matrimony, which stands immediately next to virginity in the honour accorded it by the holy Apostles.

For our present purpose, however, we have to do only with the chastity to which Religious bind themselves by their vows.

At this point it is all-important to recall the definition of a *counsel* as differentiated from a *precept*. We have learned that a counsel is not only a good work in itself that is not prescribed, but it must be better than some other good work which one is free to choose as an alternative.

The glory of virginity is that it is a better thing even than the holy estate of matrimony which was instituted in the time of man's innocency. Such is the teaching of the Fathers. St. Augustine is especially clear. In his treatises on the Married State, on Virginity, and on Widowhood, he deals at some length with this subject. He describes Christian matrimony as a condition of chastity. "Therefore," he says, "it is a good thing, but less than virginal chastity."<sup>1</sup> Again he says; "Let her feel confident that there is prepared for her a palm of greater glory, who feared not to be condemned in case

<sup>1</sup> "Nuptialis castitas est, et ideo bonum est, sed minor quam virginalis."—St. Augustine, *De Bono Conjugali*, cap. xxiii. Migne, P. L., Tom. xl, col. 393.

she were married, but that she desired to receive a more honourable crown in that she was not married. Whoso shall be willing to abide without marriage, let them not flee from it as though it were a pitfall of sin, but let them surmount it as a hill of lesser good, in order that they may rest upon the mountain of greater good, namely continence."<sup>1</sup> And still again, "The glory of the greater good (*i.e.*, virginity) is the greater from the fact that in order to obtain it, the good of the married life is transcended ; it is not that a sin in marriage is shunned."<sup>2</sup>

To Religious, who have vowed to exercise this virtue, many things allowable to seculars are forbidden, such as the state of marriage and all that pertains to that state. A Religious by his vows renders unlawful for himself that which would have been right and proper before he assumed his vows.

To the things that are forbidden to all men by the natural law and the divine commandment, he adds new obligations. It follows that he who breaks his vow of chastity in respect to the things prohibited by precept commits a triple sin. *First*, he sins by a violation of the divine command ; *second*, he commits an act of perfidy in violating the vow he has made ; *third*, he commits the sin of sacrilege, because, having dedicated himself to God, every violation of this dedication is a profanation of something sacred. "A church," says Père Valuy, "is dedicated for the purpose of worship, a chalice to receive the Precious Blood, the hands of a priest to handle the Divine

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *De Sancta Virginitate*, cap. xviii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xl, col. 405. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, cap. xxi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xl, col. 406.



Mysteries, and the Religious by the vow of chastity is consecrated to God, body and soul, thrice-holy, to be altogether, exclusively and irrevocably His property, His victim, His holocaust."<sup>1</sup>

"The Holy Spirit," says Tertullian, "having come down to dwell in us as His temple, the high-priest and sacristan of that temple is chastity."<sup>2</sup>

Thus every offence committed against the commandment by thought, word, deed, desire, or acquiescence, contains three distinct sins for him who is vowed to a life of chastity. Should the act in itself, however, not be contrary to the general divine precept, his sin would be restricted to the act of perfidy in breaking his vow, and to the sacrilege consequent upon his profanation of that which had been dedicated to God.

A person in the state of Christian marriage is incapable of making a vow of chastity in Religion, without the consent of his spouse. As we have mentioned in discussing entrance into Religion, in former times it was not uncommon for husbands and wives to enter Religion, the required consent being given. It is something, however, that could scarcely arise in our day.

A practical question that might arise is whether a professed Religious can contract a valid marriage. Under the canon law of the Roman Church, should one under a "solemn vow" of chastity contract a marriage, it would be null and void, but it is allowed

<sup>1</sup> Valuy, *Les Vertus Religieuses*, pp. 74-75 (Lyon, 1876).

<sup>2</sup> Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum*, Lib. ii, cap. i. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. i, col. 1429.

that one under " simple vows " can contract a valid marriage, although the act would be a mortal sin of sacrilege.

Amongst us who go back to the earlier custom of the Church, which did not know these later distinctions, the question is doubtful, although happily it rarely presents itself in a concrete case.

There are certain references in the Scriptures and the Fathers to those who having taken a vow of chastity forsook this obligation and married. It is invariably referred to as a sin of the most serious character. St. Paul speaks of widows who violate their vows as meriting damnation, and the references in the Fathers imply that a mortal degree of sin is incurred. St. Augustine, as we have seen, repeatedly condemns those who, having espoused themselves to Christ, " wax wanton and marry."

The question of the actual validity of such marriages, however, is one that involves difficulty. Innocent I, who was a contemporary of St. Augustine, writes, in 404, to Victricius, Bishop of Rouen, directing that professed virgins who marry are to be excommunicated, and not to be admitted even to penance until after the death of the man. He does not imply that the marriage is void, although he characterizes the sin as that of adultery.<sup>1</sup>

St. Augustine writes in terms of strongest condemnation of those who violate their vows of virginity, but does not seem to contemplate their marriages as invalid.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Innocent, *Ep.* II, cap. xiii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xx, col. 478, 479.

<sup>2</sup> So St. Francis de Sales interprets St. Augustine's teaching as

The Sixteenth Canon of Chalcedon excommunicates Religious who marry, but seems to allow the marriage to stand, and modifies St. Innocent's decision regarding admission to penance, giving the local Bishop discretionary power in such cases.

Coming down to the English Canons on the subject, we find the 129th Excerpton of Ecgbriht (A.D. 740) declaring, "If any man marry a nun, let him be anathema," but nothing is said about the validity of such a union. Canon Six of Alfred's Laws Ecclesiastical appoints heavy penalties for marrying a nun, but seems to let the marriage stand. The Seventh of Archbishop Odo's Canons (A.D. 943), however, declares a marriage with a nun to be incestuous,<sup>1</sup> and the 126th Excerpton of Ecgbriht had made an incestuous marriage null and void.<sup>2</sup>

The conclusion that seems safer, however, is that the Religious who apostatizes and marries, forms a contract the validity of which must stand, but in doing so commits a sin of a very grievous character.

being an express declaration that they were valid. He says: "Though by the common consent of all the holy Fathers and the word of the great apostle (1 Tim. v. 12), those virgins and widows have ever been held in execration, who, after having by vow and public profession consecrated themselves to God, broke and violated this vow, yet, as St. Augustine expressly declares, their marriages stood valid, until their invalidity was introduced, first into some dioceses by the ordinary authority of their bishops (he refers here to Platus, *De Bono Stat. Relig.*, Lib. ii, cap. xxi), and then by a general council held at Rome under Innocent II, in the year 1136 or 1139." (See Preface to the *Rule and Constitutions of the Sisters of the Visitation.*)

<sup>1</sup> This conception was not the product of the much-abused Middle Ages. Abbot Serenus (A.D. 395) calls such a marriage "crimen incesti." See Cassian, *Conferences*, viii, cap. xvi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 749.

<sup>2</sup> Johnson, *English Canons*, Vol. i, pp. 211 and 361.

It is not only a violation of his vow in a grave matter, but it is the sin of sacrilege, in that he takes his life which had been solemnly dedicated to God and devotes it to the ordinary uses common in the world. The fact that such a marriage is valid aggravates the sin, because it is usually an irrevocable apostasy.

## II. *Of the Virtue of Chastity*

Chastity is the virtue that regulates the affections of man in regard to the pleasures of the bodily senses. In other words, it is a power (*virtus*) given to man by the Holy Spirit by the use of which he is enabled to be chaste.

It governs concupiscence through the reason. It resides in the will, and by employing the will in its service governs all the members of the body. Three operations of chastity may be distinguished: It enables one (1) to abstain from forbidden pleasures; (2) to use permitted pleasures of the senses moderately; and (3) to deprive himself of them, if he be called by God to do so.

The first two of these belong to every Christian, being of natural obligation and divine precept; the third to those who have bound themselves by a vow of chastity.

Chastity, like all other virtues, has its seat in the will, and through the will exercises its power over the whole man. This virtue is more or less perfect, according to the measure of its domination over the whole man, purifying his thoughts, his affections, his imagination, his desires, his speech, his looks, his bodily faculties, and forbidding or restraining every



ill-regulated impulse. The true asceticism, of which chastity is the highest expression, is "aimed at bodily training, not bodily extinction; at a discipline, and not an abnegation of the will."<sup>1</sup>

The perfection of chastity lies in the strength of the habit; and this habit, like all others, depends on the exercise of constant acts. He who, in the power of the divine grace derived from prayer and sacraments, constantly exercises himself, mentally and physically, in the things that tend to the forming of pure habits of thought and action, who resists all temptations and suggestions to the contrary, fleeing every occasion of sin, will thereby develop a habit of chastity in the perfection of which habit will lie the perfection of the virtue.

### III. *Of the Difference between the Vow and the Virtue of Chastity*

The relation between the vow of chastity and the virtue is different from that which we find between the virtue and vow in the case of the other evangelical counsels.

In considering poverty, for example, we saw that many violations of the virtue were not infractions of the vow. With chastity, however, he who is vowed to it is bound to comply with all that might be demanded for the security of the virtue. Every violation of the virtue is a violation of the vow.

The *virtue* of chastity has its precepts. Many things related to it bind all men under sin, for all men must maintain purity.

<sup>1</sup> Morison, *St. Basil and His Rule*, p. 37.

It has also its counsels. Many things that are good and admirable for those who are called to them, do not apply to others, most notably, the abstention from marriage.

There are no counsels, however, that pertain to the *vow*. All is of obligation. He who has made his vow is bound under pain of sin to conform to everything required by the virtue.

#### IV. *Of Sins Against Religious Chastity*

Many things have to be considered when we come to speak of offences against chastity, for the application of this obligation is, as we have seen, universal. The spirit of chastity must dominate every department of life. Nowhere can it be violated without fault. It is, therefore, not possible to cover in any list all the kinds of offences into which the Religious might fall, but we shall mention the more common ones, trusting that these may so present the principle to be observed, that each one may be able for himself to see how it is to be applied.

1. Sins of sight.—If we try for a moment to analyse the way sin enters, we shall see how much of our wrong-doing is occasioned through the eyes. The truly chaste spirit will not desire to indulge indiscreet looks at persons or things; his constant prayer will be, “Turn away mine eyes lest they behold vanity.” St. Gregory gives us a saying that covers well the principle of safety: “It is not befitting to see that which it is not lawful to desire.”<sup>1</sup> “For,” says

<sup>1</sup> St. Greg. Mag., *Moral*, Lib. xxi, cap. ii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxvi, col. 190.

Valuy, "the look is speedily followed by the thought, the thought by the desire, and the desire by action."<sup>1</sup>

The look is the root from which the action develops. Extirpate the root, and the fruit cannot be brought forth. In order to make sure of this, we are not to be content merely to withdraw the eyes from that which we perceive to be evil. By the time we realize its character, too often the work is done, the poisoned shaft has found lodgment in the heart. Only those who, like holy Job of old, "make a covenant with the eyes,"<sup>2</sup> are safe. A modest custody of the eyes, refusing to allow them to wander carelessly, will save the soul from many a stain ;<sup>3</sup> for, says St. Augustine, "though the body remain chaste, yet may the virtue of chastity be destroyed by the emotions of the soul."<sup>4</sup>

An earnest Religious who finds himself sinning against chastity through the indulgence of the eyes, will look closely within ; for this sin, if frequent, is the evidence that something is wrong interiorly. St.

<sup>1</sup> Valuy, *Les Vertus Religieuses*, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Job xxxi. 1.

<sup>3</sup> "If we search into the genesis of the first sin that was ever committed by man we shall find that it had its origin in the steadfast gaze which Eve fixed upon the forbidden fruit ; and this should suffice to prove to us the necessity for guarding with unwearying vigilance those most vulnerable places in our defences. The Sacred Text seems to insinuate not only that, with wise precaution, she had not touched the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil, as commanded by God, but also that she had not even looked at it. For, after recounting her temptation by the serpent, the inspired writer goes on to say : 'And the woman *saw* that the tree was good to eat, and fair to the *eyes*, and delightful to *behold*.' In these words he repeats no fewer than three times that her eyes were the gates through which the desire to disobey the positive order of God had entered her soul."—Doyle, *Principles of Religious Life*, p. 448.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *Epis.*, ccxi, 10. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxiii, col. 961.

Augustine further warns his Religious that "a light eye is the messenger of a light heart."<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales therefore gives for Sisters the practical direction for the better conservation of modesty that the eyes should be "generally cast downwards, especially in the choir, refectory, chapter-house, and when appearing before seculars."<sup>2</sup>

2. Improper reading.—Intellectual curiosity has been the cause of much sin against chastity. This does not apply only to literature that is positively bad, but to much that at worst is said to be only light and frivolous; for such books dissipate the mind, destroy spiritual recollection, and send the thoughts far afield where Satan will surely see that there is prepared some evil thing for them to be engaged with. It may be wise and necessary for one to have a measure of knowledge of standard or of current literature, but an habitual novel-reading Religious is a sheer monstrosity. Nor can one excuse a practice of reading questionable literature on the ground of the necessity of knowing what is going on in the world. "The knowledge of wickedness is not wisdom,"<sup>3</sup> is a word of Scripture it were wise for those who seek chastity to remember.

3. Sins of hearing.—Listening to idle conversation, not to speak of conversation that would in itself be against purity; submitting to, or desiring flattery or complimentary speeches about oneself; permitting terms of endearment indicative of a merely human

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *Epis.*, ccxi, 10. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxiii, col. 961.

<sup>2</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ecclus.* xix. 22.



affection—all these things and many more that will suggest themselves, are contrary to Religious chastity.

4. Sins of speech.—All loud or vehement, all immoderate or immodest speech of whatever degree of seriousness, is a violation of the vow of chastity. “Be more ready to hear than to speak. Be not hasty, nor turbulent, nor clamorous, nor contentious in words; but speak modestly, bashfully, courteously, and without dissembling.”<sup>1</sup> Words implying too human an affection; idle conversation, and “jesting which is not befitting,” are sins against our obligation. Because of the peril that speech involves, silence has ever been regarded as a high Religious virtue. “It is easier to be silent altogether,” says à Kempis, “than to speak with moderation.” And again: “No one can speak with safety who would not rather be silent.”<sup>2</sup>

5. The good Religious is to flee from all immodest bodily acts and any occasion that may lead to them, as from the face of a serpent.

6. An unbroken recollectedness of bodily attitude has ever been required of the good Religious. “Alone and in society, always and everywhere, repress licence of action, indecorum of posture, any *je ne sais quoi* of luxury, all that favours sensuality and gives the enemy a hold. ‘One must be ashamed before oneself and before one’s own eyes,’ says Mother de la Chétardie.”<sup>3</sup> Many Religious Rules, and all Religious tradition, forbid crossing the legs, swinging the

<sup>1</sup> Blossius, *A Mirror for Monks* (Coleridge), p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> *De Imit.*, i, xx.    <sup>3</sup> Valuy, *Les Vertus Religieuses*, p. 80.

arms, hasty or slouching gait,<sup>1</sup> or lounging attitudes in sitting. No proper Religious house will admit easy-chairs save for the use of the sick, and Religious visiting the houses of externs are to avoid occupying them if this can be done without seeming to be odd or conspicuous (which in itself would be a violation of the principle of chastity). It is also regarded as an un-Religious bodily indulgence for those in good health to lie down, except with permission, save during such hours as are provided for rest and refreshment.

No better summary of the admonitions necessary for the guarding of chastity can be found than the following from the pen of perhaps the saintliest Religious of his century :

“Do thou carefully rule all thy members and restrain all thy senses. Be composed and staid in thy manners, joyful and serene in countenance, modest in aspect, calm and gentle in voice, innocent and pure in thought, faithful and vigorous in works, kind and affable in conversation, but thy affability must never lead to foolish mirth. Abstain prudently from blameworthy trifling, from violent laughter, from games that are wanting in due propriety and moderation ; for by these unbecoming liberties the purity of the heart is injured, and the sanctuary of holy modesty violated. . . . Whatever sweetness, whatever joy, whatever objects worthy of love or admiration, offer themselves to thy senses, receive them with a chaste

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil writes : “The gait ought not to be sluggish, which shows a character without energy, nor on the other hand pushing and pompous, as though our impulses were rash and wild.”—*Epis.*, ii, 6.

mind, and learn to refer them to God or to the state of eternal blessedness. So wilt thou be joyful in the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

All these Religious requirements may to the world seem trifling and unnecessary, but the Religious is a soldier, who, sleeping or waking, by night or by day, is in the Presence of the King; and in the royal Presence the good soldier stands ever at attention. "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God."<sup>2</sup>

7. Familiarities with others.—Weak, silly habits, so common among women, such as holding another's hand,<sup>3</sup> and yielding to demonstrations of affection, are direct violations of the vow. All these indicate irregular and improper attachments that are unworthy of those who have espoused themselves to our Lord Jesus Christ the Son of the Most High God. To

<sup>1</sup> Blossius, *The Rule of the Spiritual Life* (Bowden, London, 1903), pp. 72-3.

<sup>2</sup> Psalms cxxiii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> This form of familiarity is by no means modern or confined to women. Cassian mentions it as one of the forbidden things in the ancient Egyptian monasteries. It was regarded as "no slight fault," and "unless they expiate it by public penance when all the brethren are gathered together, none of them is allowed to be present at the prayers of the brethren." See Cassian, *Institutes*, ii, 15. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 106. Also *ibid.*, iv, 16; *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 172. The Rule of St. Pachomius also contained an injunction against it. St. Francis de Sales forbade with much strictness familiarities and caresses. See the *Visitation Constitutions*, ch. xxiii. In chapter xxxiii he also enjoins the Novice Mistress to root out "those weaknesses, those silly tendernesses or fancies which are apt to enervate and enfeeble the minds chiefly of the weaker sex, in order that like valiant women they may do the works of a solid and powerful virtue."

St. Jerome is attributed the saying : " Familiarities and the play of the hands are indications of a virginity in its agony, and of a dying virtue."<sup>1</sup>

8. Physical sloth of whatever kind is a violation of chastity. Out of such sloth arises unrecollected demeanour, self-indulgent attitudes, listlessness of bearing; seeking of mere bodily comfort; impatience of heat and cold or the like discomforts.

Idleness is to be scrupulously avoided. It has been described as " a skilful and accomplished master of malice and wickedness whose school is always open."<sup>2</sup> The heathen sage, Seneca, fathomed the true philosophy of idleness when he said, " By doing nothing one learns to do evil." Cassian gives us a monastic proverb handed down from the generations before him : " A monk who works is attacked by but one devil; but an idler is tormented by countless spirits."<sup>3</sup> The mind of man as well as the body is limited as to the number of thoughts and passions it can entertain. Let both mind and body be kept busily engaged in some labour, and there will be no room for the entrance of that which is evil. The idle mind tempts the devil.

9. Worldliness of manner, desire to appear well before others, vanity regarding one's looks, are common violations of chastity. This vanity is not that which regards worldly things only. It is even possible for a Religious to be vain of his Religious

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Valuy, *Les Vertus Religieuses*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Valuy, *Les Vertus Religieuses*, p. 98.

<sup>3</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, Lib. x, cap. xxiii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 394.



demeanour, posing, to all appearances recollectedly, before others.

10. Efforts to please others, even one's own Superiors, for their own sakes only, are fatal to chastity. The true spouse of Christ thinks only of pleasing the divine Bridegroom.

11. St. Jerome declares gluttony to be the "seed-plot of lust"—*seminarium libidinis*—or, as it has been freely and finely translated, "the mother and nurse of lust."<sup>1</sup> Therefore gluttony in any form is to be hated as the arch-enemy of chastity. Those who indulge the body cannot long remain pure ; therefore bodily mortification is necessary for the avoidance of offences against chastity, and any bodily indulgence must be regarded as a violation of this virtue. Let there be no picking or choosing of food at the table. Take the first that comes, whether it be the best or worst portion on the dish.

As a precaution against gluttony it has been from the earliest days of Religion a part of the law of Religious communities that all taking of food should be under regular discipline, and at the regular times appointed by the Rule ; and that a Superior should not grant dispensations save in cases where sickness or bodily weakness requires it. Cassian says of the Egyptian monks : " In between their regular meals in common they are especially careful that none

<sup>1</sup> St. Jerome, *Adv. Jovinianum*, Lib. ii, cap. vii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxiii, col. 310. "Gulæ horridum scelus, genitrix luxuriæ et castitatis carnifex,—The horrid sin of gluttony, the mother of lust and the murderer of chastity,"—this strong expression is found in the *Regula Monacharum*, a late compilation wrongly attributed to St. Jerome. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxx, col. 433.

should presume to gratify his palate with any food.”<sup>1</sup> The Rule of St. Pachomius sets forth the same regulation, and the Rule of St. Benedict says : “ Let no one presume to take any food or drink before or after the appointed hours.”<sup>2</sup> This does not apply to a drink of water ; “ but eating out of meal-time was always, and is now, prohibited under somewhat severe penalties.”<sup>3</sup>

### V. *Of Particular Friendships*

Among Religious in general, but especially amongst women, perhaps the most far-reaching violation of chastity lies in the indulgence of particular friendships. It is a common curse in many communities, and few are wholly free from it.

Any tendency to make one person more than another a companion and confidant should be instantly checked, otherwise it will inevitably lead not only to acts of perfidy in the violation of the spirit of chastity to which one is vowed, but will, from the very nature of the relationship, soon pass into a vicious habit that will surely make wreck of vocation sooner or later. This may not involve actual apostasy from the outward pursuance of the Religious Life, but, what is worse, will emasculate the life of all truth and sincerity, maintaining a “ form of godliness but denying the power thereof.”

It is a significant proof of the seriousness of this

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, iv, 18. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 177. *Ibid.* v, 20. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 236.

<sup>2</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Doyle, *The Teaching of St. Benedict*, p. 240.

kind of violation of chastity that writers on the Religious State are accustomed to dwell at length on the fatal effects of particular friendships.

"It must not be imagined," says Père Valuy, "that intimacies between persons of the same sex are always irreproachable, without disorder or danger. If your heart lose its liberty, what matters it to what it is attached?"

This writer then proceeds to draw a picture of the Religious who, forgetting her heavenly Spouse, to Whom she once pledged her troth, has fallen into the spiritual adultery of a strong natural love.

"Surprise your imagination in its wanderings," he says. "Examine your language, your conduct. Compare yourself with the following description where the unequivocal signs of natural inclination are given from the writings of ascetic authors.

"When a person's form begins to captivate the eyes, and her sympathetic disposition stirs the heart and makes it beat quickly; tender questions, tender words, tender looks, repeated little gifts—these are the signs given by St. Jerome and St. Bonaventura. Smiles exchanged, more eloquent than words, a certain lack of restraint that tends little by little to familiarity, complacency and studied attentions, offers of service, etc. To arrange secret interviews where no eye, no ear can intrude, to prolong them endlessly and to renew them without cause; to speak little of the things of God and much of their friendship for each other; to praise, flatter, and make excuses for each other; to complain bitterly of the advice of superiors, of

the obstacles they put in the way of interviews, of the suspicions they seem to have formed ; to grow weary of one's vocation ; to find the yoke of Rule oppressive ; to show signs of insubordination ; to be exceedingly discontented in the company of one's brethren, and to find their frank and cheerful conversations insipid and puerile ; to be restless and sad in the person's absence ; to be distracted in one's prayers by her memory ; to recommend her to God sometimes with extraordinary fervour ; to have her image deeply engraved in the soul ; to be preoccupied with her by day and by night, even in dreams ; to inquire with great solicitude where she is, what she is doing, when she will return, whether she has any affection for another ; to fall into transports of unusual joy at her return ; to suffer a sort of martyrdom when it is again necessary to be separated ; to have recourse to many expedients to find an occasion for meeting again."<sup>1</sup>

The warning against particular friendships does not mean that one should not go frequently, perhaps, to some older or wiser Religious for counsel concerning difficulties. Such a course is to be commended every way, although it is to be borne in mind that even conversation on spiritual subjects may be a danger when the person is held in the kind of regard described above. Frequent long conversations are almost always unwise, no matter with whom they are held, or on what subjects.

<sup>1</sup> Valuy, *Les Vertus Religieuses*, p. 102, *seq.*



VI. *Of Temptations against Chastity*

The obligation of chastity is a favourite playground for scruples, and in order to avoid them, let it be remembered that sins against chastity require the same knowledge, deliberation, and full consent as are necessary for the commission of other sins. One is not to accuse himself because of curious or vain thoughts that may suggest themselves without active co-operation on the part of the will.

The three steps towards sin which appear in all cases should be especially considered when the question of chastity is involved. These are *Suggestion, Pleasure, Consent*.

There is no blame involved in the entrance into the mind of a mere suggestion to sin, unless we ourselves bring it about by some sinful act or carelessness. The flashing in upon the mind of wicked thoughts and images does not constitute sin. Unless we have created or permitted the occasion for them, we are not responsible for their coming ; and often we cannot prevent them.

Nor is any sin involved in an uprising of a sense of *pleasure* or desire at the thought of the sin, if this feeling be not consented to by an act of the will. For, as St. Augustine says : " We sin not in the fact of the presence of desire, but in our consent to it."<sup>1</sup> So long as we resist the suggestion and the pleasure, we are without blame, no matter how long they may persist. One may sin venially at this point, however, through neglecting to be alert and watchful.

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *Expos. Epis. ad Rom.*, Lib. i, cap. xiii-xviii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxv, col. 2066.

Sin can be produced only by the full positive *consent* of the will. So long as the will refuses consent, the struggle, however long and difficult it be, makes for our merit rather than for our loss.

A much needed protection from scruple will be found in following St. Francis de Sales' counsel : " If you doubt whether you have consented to evil, always take the doubt as a negative."<sup>1</sup> All authorities agree on this. Gaume says : If it be "not *more than certain*, you should decide that it does not exist."<sup>2</sup>

The unvarying method of resisting temptations against chastity is that of flight. This flight is to be accomplished by diverting the mind. The first moment one is conscious of temptation, in that moment by some positive diversion he should withdraw the attention from any sort of consideration of it. Set the mind resolutely to the thought or study of other things and there will be no room in it where the temptation can find space to linger.

## VII. *Of Religious Enclosure*

In order to protect Religious chastity, and to remove as far as possible all temptations and hindrances, the maintenance of Religious enclosure has from the beginning been regarded as of the first importance, the exact terms of enclosure being settled for each Religious by his own Rule.

<sup>1</sup> *The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales*, Pt. ii, ch. xii, § 2.

<sup>2</sup> Gaume, *Manual for Confessors*, Pusey's Trans., p. 179. The author may be permitted to refer to his book, *The Warfare of the Soul*, ch. x, for a further discussion of this important subject.

The reason for this is evident. "Is not the Convent the element of the Religious?" says Père Gautrelet. "Away from it he would almost necessarily languish; he has need of retreat and solitude to keep the true spirit of Religion. The corruption of the world and the numberless distractions to be found there all tend to destroy imperceptibly his interior recollection and his taste for prayer. . . . Moreover, the Religious who breathes the air of the world too often, and loves to go out of his Convent, would not be the only one to feel the effects of this relaxation. He might communicate it to the whole community by bringing in worldly manners, a worldly spirit, and love of vanity."<sup>1</sup>

The love of enclosure marks the good Religious, and the presence or absence of this love shows how worthy or unworthy he may be to be sent into the world. As à Kempis says: "No one can safely go abroad who would not willingly remain at home."<sup>2</sup>

This love of enclosure is to be developed only by prayer and devotion to the service of our Lord within the enclosure. The human heart naturally longs for those places where it has been accustomed to hold communion with those it loves. He who has often met with God in times of prayer will find his heart turning back to the place of this blessed tryst, as the heart of an exile in a far country to scenes and places dear to his memory.

No one gives us higher doctrine concerning Reli-

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *De Imit.*, i, xx.

gious enclosure than Thomas à Kempis. " In thy cell thou shalt find what abroad thou shalt too often lose. A cell well kept is delightsome ; ill-kept is full of weariness. If in the beginning of thy conversion thou hast dwelt in it and guarded it well, it will afterward be to thee a dear friend and a most pleasant comfort. In silence the Religious soul grows and learns the mysteries of Holy Writ. There she finds rivers of tears wherein she may wash and cleanse herself night after night ; that she may be the more familiar with her Creator, the farther she dwells from all the riot of the world. Whoso therefore withdraweth himself from his acquaintance and his friends, God will draw near unto him with His holy angels. It is better for a man to hide and take care of himself than to neglect his soul and work wonders. It is a commendable thing in a Religious seldom to go out, to be unwilling to be seen, or even to see. Why wilt thou see what thou mayest not have ? The world passeth away and the lust thereof. Our sensual desires draw us to rove abroad, but when the hour is past, what carriest thou home with thee but a burdened conscience and a distracted heart ? A merry going out brings often a sad return, and a joyful evening makes a sad morning. . . . Leave vain things to the vain ; fix thou thy thoughts on God's commands to thee. Shut thy door behind thee and call unto Jesus thy Beloved. Stay with Him in thy cell, for thou shalt not find so great peace elsewhere. If thou hadst not gone abroad and hearkened to rumours, thou wouldest the better have preserved a happy peace. Since thou delightest sometimes to



hear news, it is fit thou suffer for it disquiet of heart."<sup>1</sup>

Each Religious community decides for itself what parts of the house and grounds are enclosed. It is a violation of enclosure for a Religious to pass beyond these bounds, or to bring an extern into them, without permission in each case from the Superior.

Contemplative Religious are supposed ordinarily not to leave the enclosure. The authorities of such communities may on occasion have to leave the enclosure to transact certain business for the house ; but subjects should never leave save in cases of great necessity.

Members of communities living the Mixed or Active life may need to leave the enclosure often in pursuance of their work, but permission should be received in every case, and they should report to the Superior immediately before going and on their return. It is related in the life of St. Vincent de Paul that it was his custom always on leaving and returning to the house, to make a visit to the Chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, and to report to our Lord as the true Superior. Those who devoutly followed such a custom in their going out and coming in, could suffer no hurt from their contact with the world.

From the nature of the case, enclosure has always been more strictly enforced among women Religious than among men.

The grounds for permission to leave the enclosure

<sup>1</sup> Thomas à Kempis, *De Imit.*, Lib. i, cap. xx.

have to be considered by the Superior in each case where the Rule does not give explicit directions. At the present day, when exteriority is the snare of nearly all Religious communities amongst us, Superiors in cases of doubt may safely risk erring on the side of severity.

Religious absent from the Convent should stay whenever possible at some other Religious house, or at the house of some devout person who understands what is commonly demanded by Religious modesty and reserve.

Sisters should never eat at a table with men unless they be their immediate relatives. Nothing short of unavoidable necessity would justify a Sister taking a meal in a hotel or boarding-house dining-room, or other like public place of entertainment. A little forethought in almost every case would provide against such a necessity.

A question that frequently arises is that of Sisters leaving their convents to visit relatives. It cannot in charity be forgotten that something is due to her family by a Religious, and that it is not unreasonable for them to wish to see her and have her with them from time to time. Each particular case must be governed by its own circumstances. The obligation of poverty, as well as that of enclosure, is involved. One sometimes sees Religious taking long and expensive journeys to see their people, which they would never have been able to take had they remained in the world. The case is altered when the family, being able to do so, is willing to meet the expense, although in this event, the question whether those vowed to

poverty should allow others to spend considerable sums unnecessarily on them, would require to be considered.

The counsel of one of the wisest Religious of our day, the Rev. Father Benson, the venerable founder of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, on this subject, is as follows :—

“ If Sisters have no immediate friends to whom they should go on a visit, they ought to feel rather thankful that there is no call to leave the roof of their Society. They should remember how many people there are in worldly life who never leave their place of ordinary sojourn. A poor person cannot go to the seaside. Why should we, who have taken vows of Religious Poverty? Sometimes a Sister needing change might go to a branch house situated in the sort of climate that is most desirable. But going out to stay with secular friends or in lodgings is most undesirable. We ought never as Religious to be going unnecessarily where the restraint of the Rule will not be felt. We never ought to desire a holiday as an escape from Rule. We *may* need *rest*. Sometimes change for awhile to another house may be a refreshment. But to go outside the restraint of the Rule must always be undesirable. It only tends to make such restraint irksome. The more we keep our cell, the more we shall love it. It may be right to visit parents or immediate relatives ; and sometimes an old friend, living in a quiet, retired way, who is like a mother to one, may be approved by the Superior. But Sisters should never go to friends living in the world, so as to respond to social environment,

unless it be to visit their actual, immediate family.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From MS. *Counsels to the Community of St. Mary* (Peekskill), by the Rev. Fr. Benson, S.S.J.E. To this may be added the counsel of St. Basil, who did not forbid visits to relatives, but made it exceptional. “To visit anyone,” he says, “either for the sake of kinship or friendship, is foreign to our profession.”—*Reg. Brev.*, 311.



## CHAPTER X

### RELIGIOUS OBEDIENCE

#### I. *Of the Principle of Obedience*

THE great foe of the Divine will is self-will in man. It alone can stand in the way of the perfect operation of God's will. Not even the fallen angels can any longer baulk His purpose unless they can procure the co-operation of a human will. St. Bernard says : " Let self-will cease, and there will be no hell, for upon what will that fire fasten its rage, but upon self-will ? " <sup>1</sup>

We are taught everywhere in Holy Scripture to distrust our wills. Even our Lord, whose human will was perfect in all its movements, tells us repeatedly that He did not depend on it in anything, but on His Father's will. " My meat," He says, " is to do the will of Him that sent me." " I seek not Mine own will " ; and in Gethsemane He cries again and again, " Not My will, but Thine be done." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Cesset voluntas propria, et infernus non erit. In quem enim ignis ille desaeviet, nisi in propriam voluntatem ? "—St. Bernard, *Sermo iii, In Tempore Resurrectionis*. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. clxxxiii, col. 290.

<sup>2</sup> St. John iv. 34 ; v. 30 ; St. Luke xxii. 42.

Thus does He, by abrogating a human will that could not have been other than perfect, teach us that our only safety lies in the mortification of our own will in everything. "Since our Lord has said, 'I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me,' " says St. Basil, "every judgment of our own wills is dangerous. And this David well knew when he said, 'I have sworn and am steadfastly purposed to keep Thy righteous judgments' <sup>1</sup>—not my own wishes."<sup>2</sup> St. Basil's Rules abound in this teaching. "Even if a thing be good in itself," he says, "the Religious should not do it on his own authority."<sup>3</sup> And again: "Anything that is chosen of one's own will, is alien to the cultivation of piety."<sup>4</sup>

It is a principle of human conduct that if we bind ourselves once for all to a course of action, the pursuit of it will thereafter be easier. So God incites those who would live the Life of the Counsels to bind themselves once for all to a life of Obedience in order that they may find it easier in all things to replace their wills by His Will.

He imparts to us the virtue of obedience; that is, He gives us a power (*virtus*), which when used conscientiously will enable us efficaciously to prefer His will to our own. And not only so, but as a strong man accomplishes great tasks with ease, so does this virtue or power of obedience enable us promptly, easily and sweetly to submit our will and judgment in things that would for hardness be well-nigh impossible without this supernatural aid. It enables us to

<sup>1</sup> St. John vi. 38; Psalms, cxix. 106.

<sup>2</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Brevius*, 137. <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 60. <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

find delight in that which the natural man finds harsh and intolerable. As St. Leo tersely says: "*Obedientia mollit imperium*,"—Obedience softens rule.<sup>1</sup>

In a Religious community, God appoints one to be in His stead, and to such an one we pledge our obedience. Let it be understood, however, that we do not bind ourselves primarily to abdicate our wills in favour of the will of another weak creature like ourselves, but we vow to obey him because he is to us the representative of God. We bind ourselves to obey a Superior not for the mere sake of obeying him, but in order to lay hold of a definite means and method by which we can emancipate ourselves from the slavery of our wills. Therefore, in its essence, the vow is to obey God, not man.

All good Superiors will have this in mind in calling out the virtue of Obedience in their subjects, and they will ever strive to exercise authority *secundum Deum*, that is, "according to God," and never "according to man."

When one "teaches obedience without due relation to God to Whom alone obedience should be given, such a teacher may secure obedience for a time and while he is there; but as obedience is founded on him, it comes to naught when he leaves, and the disciple is no more truly humble, resigned, and obedient than he was before. But the teacher who inculcates obedience immediately to God is, as it were, passed over, and the disciple is brought into immediate relation with God, Who is ever permanent and present. Hence whatever becomes of the

<sup>1</sup> St. Leo Mag., *Sermo* xxxv. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. liv, col. 252.

teacher, whether he live or die, remain or depart, the soul continues still in her divine obedience, and in human also, according to the divine will.”<sup>1</sup>

## II. *Of the Nature and Excellence of Religious Obedience*

Religious Obedience is not the obedience which is due ordinarily and by all men to God under precept ; nor is it the obedience which may be due to man in view of ordinary human relationships.

It is a work of supererogation and counsel which God does not demand, and which man cannot require. It is offered to God as the matter of one of the evangelical counsels ; and is the object of one of those perpetual vows which are essential in order to constitute the Religious Life.

“ Obedience derives its excellence from its object, which is the will of God, revealed to us by the will of the Superior.”<sup>2</sup>

All authorities agree that “ Obedience is the most important and weighty of the three vows of Religion.”<sup>3</sup>

Cassian informs us that this was the teaching and practice of the desert Fathers. “ They hasten with the utmost earnestness and zeal,” he says, “ to attain the virtue of Obedience, which they put not merely before manual labour and reading and silence, and the quietness of the cell, but even before all virtues, so that they consider that all else should be second to it, and are content to undergo any amount of incon-

<sup>1</sup> *The Inner Life of Dame Gertrude More*, Vol. i, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Giraud, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, p. 295 (Ed. Thurston).

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 8.



venience if only it may be seen that they have in no way violated this virtue.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Jerome, describing these same Egyptian monks, says : “ Among them the first principle of union is to obey their Superiors, and to do whatever they command.”<sup>2</sup>

St. Augustine says : “ Obedience is in a certain way the mother of all the virtues.”<sup>3</sup> He also calls it “ the mother and guardian of all the virtues in the rational creature.”<sup>4</sup> Again, that it is “ in men and in every rational creature the fountain and perfection of all righteousness ” ; <sup>5</sup> and instituting a comparison, he says : “ The good of Obedience is better than the good of Chastity.”<sup>6</sup>

This comparison of obedience with chastity is common among writers of all ages. Speaking of the austerities employed, according to Saint Paul’s practice, for the purpose of keeping the body under, St. Francis de Sales says : “ The Evil One cares not how much you macerate your body provided you nourish your self-will. It is not austerity he fears, it is obedience. What greater austerity is there than the constant subjection of the will to obedience ? ” <sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, Lib. iv, cap. xii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 165-6.

<sup>2</sup> St. Jerome, *Epis.* xxii, 35, *Ad Eustochium*. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxii, col. 419.

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, *De Bono Conjugali*, xxiii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xl, col. 393.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, Lib. xiv, cap. xii, *P. L.*, Tom. xli, col. 420.

<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine, *In Psal.*, lxxii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxvi, col. 904.

<sup>6</sup> St. Augustine, *De Bono Conjugali*, cap. xxiii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xl, col. 393.

<sup>7</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Letters*, lxxxiv (Lear).

St. Gregory the Great says : " Obedience is the only virtue that implants other virtues in the mind, and keeps them safe when planted."<sup>1</sup> " Obedience is an epitome of all the virtues," is a fine maxim that was formerly credited to St. Jerome.<sup>2</sup>

Following the teaching of the Fathers that Obedience is the greatest of the virtues, St. Thomas<sup>3</sup> gives these grounds for the doctrine :

*First*, because that which is consecrated by obedience is the nobler offering. In following the virtue of poverty we renounce the perishable riches of the world, goods precarious at best, and of which we may at any time be stripped by the changes and chances of this earthly life. By chastity we renounce the vain satisfaction of the senses ; but by Obedience we consecrate to God ourselves, soul and body, understanding and will ;—in short, the whole man, and that not only to be a sacrifice, but to be immolated once for all as a whole burnt offering to God.

*Second*, because the Counsel of Obedience has a wider extent than any other, including within itself all other possible counsels. It embraces in its meaning and extent both poverty and chastity, and, as we have already seen, it was not until nearly thirteen centuries after Christ that these two latter vows were taken explicitly by Religious, since they were considered to be included in the vow of Obedience. For

<sup>1</sup> St. Greg. Mag., *Moral. Lib.* xxxv, cap. xiv. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxvi, col. 765.

<sup>2</sup> Pseudo-St. Jerome, *Regula Monacharum*, cap. vi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxx, col. 411.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 8.

this reason, the Fathers are unanimous in declaring Obedience to be the source and root, the mother and mistress, of all the virtues.

*Third.* St. Thomas gives a further reason for exalting Obedience above other virtues; because it advances us to the final end of Religion which is Perfection more directly and perfectly than any other virtue, and for this reason is the most perfect.

Rodriguez concludes from the above considerations "that Obedience is the virtue that essentially constitutes Religion, and properly makes a Religious." "Take Obedience along with you as your guide," he says, "and embrace all the occasions it shall present you, and you need do no more."<sup>1</sup> And St. Francis de Sales teaches: "If the Religious does not obey, he cannot have any virtue,<sup>2</sup> because it is principally Obedience that makes him a Religious as being the proper and especial virtue of Religion."<sup>3</sup>

### III. *Of the Vow of Obedience*

The vow of Religious Obedience contains two distinct obligations.<sup>4</sup> (1) A promise made to the community and to the Superior to obey them, and (2) a vow to God to keep this promise.

It follows from this that one violating Religious Obedience is guilty of a double transgression. He

<sup>1</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, pp. 228-9.

<sup>2</sup> A sermon on Obedience and Humility, doubtfully attributed to St. Augustine, gives the same doctrine: "Sine obedientia virtutes nullae. Ubi abest, adest superbia."—See Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xl, col. 1221.

<sup>3</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, xi, p. 166.

<sup>4</sup> See St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 88, Art. 5.

commits the sin of *sacrilege* in breaking his vow to God, and he adds to this the sin of *unfaithfulness* or *injustice* by breaking his promise to man.

The vow of Obedience binds one to submit to all lawful commands of Superiors, and to observe all the Rules that express or imply an obligation.<sup>1</sup>

This requires some explanation. The only *essential* object of the vow is an action that is definitely commanded. This follows from the nature of obedience ; for there can be no obedience, properly speaking, where there is no command.

A subject might bind himself to conform to every known wish of his Superior, and such an attitude might be praiseworthy as indicating a good and thorough Religious ; but it would not touch the vow of Obedience, since there can be no Obedience where there is no command.

No Religious, therefore, is bound, so far as his vow is concerned, to comply with the mere *pleasure* or *wish* of a Superior. Such an attitude on the part of the Superior does not create an obligation in view of the subject's vow of Obedience, however meritorious it may be in the subject to respond to the known wish and pleasure of his Superior, especially if it be on his part an act of the mortification of his own self-will.

#### IV. *Of the Matter of Religious Obedience*

The matter of Religious Obedience may be the written Rule, Constitutions and Customal, to which the Religious is bound, or a lawful precept imposed by the will of those in lawful authority.

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, p. 70.



The matter is twofold—*remote* or general, and *proximate* or particular. The remote matter is every act that the Superior has the right to command. The proximate matter is the particular precept that a Superior may prescribe at any given time, and in whatever manner, if only his will be clearly expressed to the subject.

Two qualities are necessary to render a precept valid. (1) It must be a lawful thing, *i.e.*, such as a Superior has the right to prescribe, and (2) the Superior giving the command must have the lawful power and authority to exact this obedience. If either of these qualities is lacking, the precept will not be proper matter of obedience.

#### V. *Of Superiors, and their Duty of Enforcing Obedience*

It is incumbent on a Superior to give opportunity for the exercise of Obedience. Religious profession, as we have seen, is of the nature of a contract. As the subject violates his contract if he fails to obey, so the community violates its part of the agreement if through the laxity of a Superior it withdraws from the subject, without due cause, the opportunity of that practice of obedience that is necessary for his advance in perfection.

It is a like fault in a Superior if he consult too much with the Religious concerning his obediences and the method of fulfilling them. The opportunity for increasing the grace and virtue of obedience is often thus withdrawn ; but more serious still, a temptation is offered him to bring the Superior's directions

before the tribunal of his own judgment, often to his own hurt.

A Religious takes his vows in accordance with the Rule of his community. In requiring the obedience of his subjects, a Superior therefore is limited by what the Rule commands, permits, or implies. He must confine his commands to those things which belong at least to the spirit of the Rule he is set to administer.

The Religious by his vow binds himself to obey in all things that are conformed to the spirit of the Rule, and in those things which are neither *beyond* the Rule nor *contrary* to it.<sup>1</sup>

Those things are beyond the Rule which are foreign to it, which lie altogether outside its scope, or that exceed its requirements. A Superior has no right to demand things that are foreign to the Rule, or that lie outside its intent, but he can on occasion command that which may exceed its ordinary requirements. He would, however, have no right to set such permanent requirements as would involve a practical change in the Rule. For example, if the Rule required the members of the community to give three hours a day to manual labour, he would have the right in order to meet the exigencies of a special occasion to require double that time of any or all of his subjects, but he could not change the period of work permanently for the whole community.

Those things are contrary to the Rule that are (a) less perfect than the Rule contemplates; (b) that are

<sup>1</sup> Suarez, *Opera Omnia*, III, liv, x, c. 8 (Paris, 1866).

clearly opposed to its letter or spirit; (c) that are evil. Were such things demanded, the subject would not be bound, as they are not comprehended in his vow of Obedience. In regard to the last point, St. Gregory states the doctrine that all the authorities without exception adhere to: "A sin ought never to be committed through Obedience,<sup>1</sup> but sometimes a good deed which is being performed ought, through Obedience, to be given up."<sup>2</sup> Many good actions must indeed be refrained from, except under Obedience. This applies especially to practices of bodily mortification in almost all communities. St. Francis de Sales speaks with great vigour against those "who, deluded by their own fancy, measure holiness by austerity, and more readily offer to deprive their appetite of food than their hearts of self-will."<sup>3</sup>

The Superior, however, has the same right, as is described above, to set less perfect requirements on special occasions as his judgment may dictate, but these would generally fall under the head of dispensations. Nothing that is against conscience can be demanded by him.

A subject may be guilty of disobedience by excess as well as by defect. "The kind of disobedience is one and the same," says the Abbot Daniel, "if a man break the Elder's commands, whether it be owing to zeal in work or love of ease . . . except that those

<sup>1</sup> See also St. Basil, *Reg. Brev.*, 114.

<sup>2</sup> St. Gregory Mag., *Moral. Lib.* xxxv, cap. xiv. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxvi, col. 766. See St. Basil, *Reg. Brev.*, 60. See also Clark, *Observances of Barnwell Priory*, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup> St. Francis de Sales, Preface to *The Rule and Constitutions of the Sisters of the Visitation*.

faults that seem to show themselves under the guise of virtues, and in the form of spirituality, are worse, and less likely to be cured.”<sup>1</sup>

Religious are bound to obey all their Superiors each in his own jurisdiction. Should a higher and lower Superior give contrary commands, the authority of the higher would take precedence. The subject must be sure, however, that there is a true contrariety between the two, as an inferior authority not infrequently has the power of dispensing the subject from fulfilling the precept of his Superior. When the inferior authority asserts this right, the subject is required to submit at least until he can refer the question to the higher authority.

A subject has always the right of appeal to the ultimate Superior, and must be permitted communication with him at all times by those under whose immediate direction he lives. If it is evident, however, that the appeal is made on insufficient ground, or without a spirit of obedience to the authority in question, the latter should be strongly supported. The Augustinian *Observances of Barnwell Priory* deal with this point in a valuable way. “The Prelate ought always to take the side of his Sub-Prior,” they direct, “unless something is made out against him in the way of legitimate proof; for his authority will soon be weakened by those who wish him ill if he be not supported by the staff of the Prelate.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Conferences*, iv, cap. xx. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 608-9.

<sup>2</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 147.



VI. *Of the Relation of Conscience to Religious Obedience*

We have seen that a Superior is not competent to direct a subject to do anything that is morally evil, and in no case has a Superior the right to force a subject to do what would violate his conscience.

How far, then, is conscience to be permitted to influence the obedience of a subject?

Conscience can be allowed to intervene between a Superior and his subject only when an undoubted violation of God's command is involved. When the element of doubt enters, the benefit of it must be given to the Superior, and the subject must submit when the matter hangs upon a question of judgment, or of prudence or discretion.<sup>1</sup> Just because God has called him to be His representative, the Superior must be assumed to have light and guidance from the Holy Spirit that no subject possesses.

Therefore it follows that the exercise of prudence and discretion is for the Superior and not for the subject. This principle must be accepted in all forms of government, whether secular or religious, else everything would be resolved into chaos, and every man would become a law unto himself.

Let it be understood, however, that this doctrine regarding discretion is applied here only to questions concerning the wisdom, etc., of an obedience laid on a subject. When it comes to the performance of the obedience he who undertakes it must exercise discretion and prudence as they may be given him by

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, p. 64.

the Holy Spirit. In its proper sphere, discretion holds the highest place. St. Bernard judges that it is charged with the direction of all other virtues, since it is nothing less in its essence than rightly ordered charity. In this office it both controls and stimulates the virtues ; it regulates the affections, and instructs in manners.<sup>1</sup>

A subject, when inclined to think that a Superior has laid upon him an obedience that is against conscience, must remember that in this matter he is on the point of charging his Superior with the most grievous moral offence which he, as Superior, could commit, that of using his authority to force another into sin.

Therefore a subject cannot in such cases be acquitted of recklessness in respect to charity unless, before resisting, he consult the best authorities to make sure that his conscience is correctly guided. And if such authorities are not available, he is bound in charity to follow the directions of his Superior.

### VII. *Of Obedience to Chapter*

The vow of Obedience is made according to the Rule, but since it is not possible for any Rule to contain all things, the community has, through its Chapter, the right to explain or interpret its provisions. Such explanations and interpretations are binding upon all.

The Chapter also has the right to make changes in the Constitutions and Rule of the community accord-

<sup>1</sup> St. Bernard, Sermon. xlix, *In Cantica*, Migne, P. L., Tom. clxxxiii, col. 1018,

ing to the constitutional method provided, and all such changes are binding upon its members whether they agree to them or not. It is enough if such a proportion of the community consent to the change as may be required by the Rule itself. All members are bound to observe such changes even if they individually opposed them, and were not professed in accordance with them. This does not apply, however, when such alterations involve a total change in the life and purpose of the community, as, for example, from the Active to the Contemplative Life.

### VIII. *Of the Virtue of Obedience*

The virtue of Obedience is defined as that power (*virtus*) which the Holy Spirit imparts which enables one to set aside his own will and accept the will of another.

The vow of Obedience, as we have seen, binds one to perform the thing that is lawfully commanded by a lawful Superior. The question asked in relation to the vow is, Is he who commands it my lawful Superior, and is the thing commanded that which he has the right to require? The obligation of the vow of Obedience is satisfied with compliance if this question finds an affirmative answer.

The virtue goes beyond this. It remembers that disobedience is not merely an offence against the good order of the community, but goes much deeper, involving a certain moral defect. As St. Basil says, it is "the proof of a multitude of sins, of tainted faith, of doubtful hope, of proud and over-weening con-

duct.”<sup>1</sup> In order to make impossible so fatal a condition and to avoid even the peril of approach to it, the truly earnest soul cannot be content to give only a technical submission. Such a limitation would be intolerable to it. It looks more within and asks, Is this requirement one that affords me a lawful and proper opportunity of mortifying my self-will? If this question be answered in the affirmative, the soul, exercising the virtue of obedience, proceeds to yield obedience without stopping to consider whether or not it is under strict obligation to comply.

The virtue of Obedience is that which gives merit and worth to the fulfilment of the vow. Therefore, a good Religious does not wait for “the spur of obligation.”

It is the teaching of St. Thomas that there are two kinds of obedience. The first is that submission to the precepts of a Superior which is essential to the fulfilling of the obligation. This he calls *sufficient* obedience, to withhold which involves always a degree of sin. The second, which he calls *perfect* obedience, is that which leads a man to yield himself to a Superior in all things whatsoever that are not sinful.<sup>2</sup> The Angelical Doctor here teaches that obedience is more extensive than mere obligation. It is not content to do the things that are required preceptively, but does spontaneously all that will make for the better protection of the vow, even though the thing done may not seem strictly speaking to be matter of obedience.

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius Tract.*, xxviii, 2.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 104, Art. 5 ad 3.



Obedience is more perfect in proportion as it is more universal. He who would follow perfectly the Counsel of Obedience will not be content with merely external acts in compliance with the vow, but will go forward to immolate himself wholly. He will bring the interior man completely into subjection to the will or the wish of the Superior who stands over him in God's stead, remembering the strong teaching of St. Basil, that "all that is done apart from him is but as theft and sacrilege leading to destruction and not to usefulness, even though it appear to thee to be good."<sup>1</sup>

He does this remembering that the virtue of Obedience looks more directly to the mortification of self-will than to the formal doing of the will of another. The mortification of self-will is the *end* to be attained; the submission to a Superior is the *means* employed under God to attain the end. He who is content to stop with what St. Thomas calls *sufficient* obedience (*sufficiens ad salutem*), cannot be condemned as a bad Religious. He is literally fulfilling all to which he has essentially bound himself. But he is not giving what approaches a universal obedience, and is therefore stopping with the least and lowest that it is possible to offer to God as a Religious.

The ideals of Religion, as set forth by our Lord, have always led to that cultivation of the virtue of Obedience which produces as its fruit the most universal and therefore the most perfect type. The good Religious is not content with less. He has ever before him St. Basil's ideal monk who is instructed to

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *De Renuntiatione Saeculi*, 4.

“spurn and cast aside every wish of thine own, that thou mayest be found as a clean vessel, keeping ever pure to the praise and glory of God the virtues that are put in thee.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Bonaventura, for example, in interpreting the general spirit and force of the Rule of St. Francis, holds that the Friars Minor make a universal vow of perfect obedience, binding themselves to submit to their Superior in all save that which is directly contrary to the Rule or to their salvation.

The vow of Obedience in the Society of Jesus is interpreted even more strictly “as comprehending all things which are not contrary to good morals or to our Rule, and as directly extending to most difficult or arduous ministries, with the utmost dependence in the smallest matters upon Superiors.”<sup>2</sup>

Such is the attitude of those who, fearing self-will as the only root of sin, desire to give themselves to the utmost to the cultivation of Obedience. “When we have attained to this,” says St. Francis de Sales, “we then so love to obey that we have an insatiable desire of being commanded in order that all we do may be done through Obedience. And this is the Obedience of the perfect.”<sup>3</sup>

### IX. *Of the First Degree of Obedience*

The virtue of Obedience finds its expression in three degrees that are distinguished for us by St. Ignatius.

The first degree consists in performing *instantly*

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *De Renuntiatione Saeculi*, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Suarez, *The Religious State*, Vol. ii, p. 28 (Humphrey's Digest).

<sup>3</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, x, pp. 145-6.

and *fully* the precept of a Superior. This degree of obedience is necessary to fulfilling one's Religious obligation. St. Bernard describes the promptness and completeness of the obedience of one who has attained to this degree as follows: "He does not know what it is to delay, he never puts off until tomorrow. Tardiness is unknown to him, he anticipates his Superior. He prepares his eyes for seeing, his ears for hearing, his feet for the journey. He gathers himself together that he may wholly compass the will of his Superior."<sup>1</sup>

St. Basil, commenting on the same subject, says the Religious must not have dominion for a single instant over his person and his actions.<sup>2</sup>

Cassian tells us that the monk of the desert, on the first call of his Superior quitted his task, and went with the utmost speed, not even lingering to finish one letter that he was forming when the summons came; for "he aims not at abridging or saving his labour but rather hastens with the utmost earnestness and zeal to attain the virtue of Obedience."<sup>3</sup>

Rodriguez distinguishes three sorts of Obedience that fall under this first degree: "The first is when we comply with a precept of Obedience, and this we are obliged to. The second is when we do a thing for the least word's speaking. This Obedience is more perfect than the other, for he that obeys at a word is certainly more humble and submissive than

<sup>1</sup> St. Bernard, *Serm. de Diversis*. Sermo xli. Migne, P. L., Tom. clxxxiii, col. 657.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, Lib. iv, cap. xii. Migne, P. L., Tom. xlix, col. 165.

he that waits for a command in the virtue of holy Obedience. The third is when we perform the Superior's will upon the least sign of it being manifested."<sup>1</sup>

### X. *Of the Second Degree of Obedience*

The second degree of Obedience consists in an entire conformity of the will to that of the Superior by really making his will ours.

We come to Religion to do the will of another rather than our own. This outward performance is sufficient to fulfil our vow of Obedience, and the vow does not bind us to make another's will our own interiorly. Therefore, to make another's will our own belongs to the exercise of the virtue of Obedience.

The Religious who has attained to this degree of Obedience has one operation of will that governs all others, namely, that of willing to do his Superior's will. Our Lord's words apply to him when He speaks of those who "will to do His will."<sup>2</sup> These have no will of their own except to do promptly and perfectly whatever is willed for them. This exception, however, involves the constant, completest action of our wills. To do the will of another in Holy Obedience does not mean that my will has to be crushed and emasculated of all force and power. To follow the will of a Superior because my will had become inactive; to follow another in a dull, mechanical fashion as some beast of burden follows its master,

<sup>1</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 236.

<sup>2</sup> St. John vii. 17.



would constitute an unworthy offering of self to God, and one would gain little or no merit by such a life. Holy Obedience aims "at a discipline, and not an abnegation, of the will," as a modern writer says in interpreting St. Basil's principle of asceticism.<sup>1</sup> The will is ever to be an alert, active force. It is only by a definite act of my will that I can do the will of another. "He that wills to do the will of the Father shall know of the doctrine," said our Lord, and in this saying He meant not to crush, but to call forth the use of, our will. He meant to show us how our will was to be disciplined into an intelligent, formal following of the divine Will, and the reward of deeper knowledge of the teaching and purpose of God should be ours not because we had abnegated our wills, but because we had used them. Perhaps the most intense, definite, and formal act of a human will of which we have any record was when our Lord said in Gethsemane, "Not My will but Thine be done."<sup>2</sup> That is to say, the most perfect and most powerful act of a human will of which we know was one that issued in a deliberate renunciation of its own desires. This is our example in Obedience. The true exercise of this virtue consists not in the crushing of our powers of willing, but in their development under such discipline as will bring about their complete dedication to the service of the divine Will.

This finds its best test when difficult or repugnant things are required. When one under these conditions zealously embraces the directions given, he gives the true sign that his own desire is to conform

<sup>1</sup> Morison, *op. cit.*, p. 37.    <sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxii. 42.

himself without any mental reservation to the will of God as expressed by his Superior.

Such difficult obediences are, in fact, the only real test of a subject's will, for it is no test when one is assigned the work that naturally pleases him.

Hence it follows that those are praiseworthy who are fearful of being set to perform a task that accords with their own taste and inclination ; and who, on the other hand, rejoice when told to do that for which they have an aversion, being satisfied in such a case that it is not their own will that they are seeking.

It is not always, however, that the commands given under Obedience are repugnant to the natural man. In the activities of the Religious Life certain men must be brought into prominence, and given assignments that even the world would regard as posts of honour. Under such conditions one has to be even more vigilant lest the natural spirit prevail. These conditions were taken cognizance of at an early period in the monastic development in the Church. St. Gregory the Great teaches : " When success in this world is enjoined, when a high rank is commanded to be taken, he who obeys these commands makes void for himself the virtue of his Obedience if he is eager for these things with longing of his own. For he guides not himself by the rule of Obedience who, in attaining to the good things of this life, gives way to his own natural desire of ambition."<sup>1</sup>

It follows further that those who take pleasure only

<sup>1</sup> St. Gregory Mag., *Moral.*, Lib. xxxv, cap. xiv. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxvi, col. 766.

in what their own wills approve have not in any way approached the degree of Obedience which we are considering ; nor have they indeed entered in any measure upon the life of Obedience. Such souls have ever been the bane of Religious communities. They wish only for commands that please them, and employ artifices to bring the Superior to direct what they themselves wish. Of these St. Bernard says : " He that either openly or covertly endeavours to have his Superior command him what he has a mind to himself, is much deceived if he pretend to any merit from such obedience ; for he does not obey his Superior, but rather does his Superior obey him."<sup>1</sup>

The Superior who yields to the machinations of such spirits is not able to maintain any logical or consistent plan or policy whereby the community might glorify God in its life and labour, but must be continually occupying himself to find out what each one desires, and must accommodate himself to every man's humour and whim ; whereas they ought to seek to know his will and to anticipate it. They do not come to Religion to make the Superior submit and conform to their desires, but rather to live in humble submissiveness of will.

The good Religious wills only what his Superior wills, and rejects only what he rejects.

### XI. *Of the Third Degree of Obedience*

The third degree of Obedience consists in a conformity of the judgment to that of the Superior.

<sup>1</sup> St. Bernard, *Serm. de Divers*, xxxv. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. clxxxiii, col. 636.

It was a saying of Saint Ignatius that he who submitted his will, but not his judgment, to his Superior, had but one foot in Religion.

In order to cultivate the spirit of submission to the judgment of our Superior, First, we must frequently remind ourselves that God gives to those on whom He lays the responsibility of deciding and directing, special grace and guidance which those who have not such burdens cannot expect. Secondly, we should cultivate a sense of the limitations of our knowledge of even external matters and treasure up instances in which our assured judgment has proved wrong. "How many things have we believed," says Rodriguez, "how many things have we given out for certain and infallible, which when afterwards being disabused, we have found to be otherwise ; and we have met with the confusion which rashness and too much credulity bring along with them. If another person should deceive us twice or thrice, we should never trust him more ; why, then, do we still trust our own judgment that has so frequently imposed on us ?"<sup>1</sup> This degree of obedience therefore is designed of God to protect us from our own errors of judgment.

Even if the Superior's judgment be wrong, that is no affair of the subject. As we have considered elsewhere, matters involving discretion, judgment and prudence, are not for the decision of subjects, but for Superiors. Confusion would quickly ensue if those who should obey and execute, undertook to review and revise the judgment of their Superior. Such a

<sup>1</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 269.



course would not be tolerated in worldly business ; much less, then, should it find place among those who have undertaken to live a life of Obedience.

Intellectual pride is the last foe to be vanquished, and the Religious who would make progress in this degree of Obedience must be alert against temptation. St. John Climacus advises those who are tempted to question the judgment of their Superiors, to treat such assaults as they would those against chastity or faith, that is, not dwell upon them, but fleeing from them, to use the occasion the more to abase and humble themselves. This is also the teaching of St. Francis de Sales.<sup>1</sup>

The zealous Religious will not be content, however, with dealing with such temptations when they come, but will desire to go behind the temptation and cut away the root that produces it ; this root is private judgment. " The exercise best fitted to destroy private judgment is the cutting off of all sorts of discourses and occasions where it would make itself the master, and making it feel that it is only a servant. For it is only by repeated acts that we acquire virtues. . . . When, then, you feel a desire to judge whether a thing is well or ill ordered, deprive your own judgment of that discussion."<sup>2</sup> " The sole and only remedy for private judgment is to neglect what comes into our thoughts, and to apply ourselves to something better."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, xiv, p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xi, p. 176.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv, p. 220.

XII. *Of Blind Obedience*

What is known as blind obedience pertains to the third degree of this virtue.

Much misunderstanding has arisen among the uninstructed from the mistaken notion that blind obedience involves the delivery of one's conscience into the hands of a Superior. This quality in obedience has no reference whatever to conscience. It refers only to the judgment and understanding.

The authorities distinguish in relation to the submission of judgment two kinds of Obedience, that which is *imperfect*, which is said "to have eyes to its own advantage";<sup>1</sup> and that which is *perfect*. The one discusses the Superior's commands, summoning them before the tribunal of its own judgment; the other obeys without stopping to reason.

The rule for the exercise of this perfect type of obedience is that "in all things where there appears to be no sin, we ought not to discuss the case, but to obey with a holy simplicity of heart, concluding our Superior's command to be conformable to the law of God, and making this command, and obedience itself, the sole motive and reason why we obey."<sup>2</sup>

St. Basil, in his Longer Rules, forbids Religious to investigate curiously the reasons why a Superior gives this or that direction.<sup>3</sup>

Cassian records that this quality of obedience was required of the monks of the desert in the fifth century. They yield, he says, "unhesitating

<sup>1</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius*, 48.

allegiance and unquestioning obedience,"<sup>1</sup> and are "quick to fulfil, without any discussion, all those things that are ordained by their Superior, as if they were commanded by God from Heaven."<sup>2</sup>

St. John Climacus seems to consider nothing as obedience save what is marked with this quality. He defines obedience as a movement of the will without previous discourse or examination. He also calls it an entire renouncing of our own discernment.<sup>3</sup>

St. Jerome instructs the young monk Rusticus : "Whatever your Superior may order you to do, you will believe to be wholesome for you. You will not pass judgment upon those who are placed over you, for your duty will be to obey them and to do what you are told."<sup>4</sup>

St. Gregory the Great says : "True obedience neither examines the Superior's command, nor his intentions therein, since he who has subjected the guidance of his life to a Superior rejoices only in doing what is commanded him. He that knows how to obey well, does not know how to interpose his own judgment."<sup>5</sup>

St. Bernard also testifies to the excellence of blind obedience. Describing the good novice, he says : "By fortitude he subjects himself wholly to an obedience that fulfils but does not discern. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, i, 3. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iv, x. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 162.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 246.

<sup>4</sup> Jerome, *Epis.* cxxv, *Ad Rusticum Monachum*. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxii, col. 1081.

<sup>5</sup> St. Gregory Mag., *In Prim. Regum.*, Lib. ii, cap. iv. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxix, col. 131.

Indeed, perfect obedience is especially blind in the beginning ; that is, not to discern why or wherefore a thing is commanded, but to guard this alone, namely, that faithfully and humbly the obedience be performed. . . . It is impossible that a novice should long remain in his cell, or persevere in Religion, if he follows the common rule of ordinary prudence, and if he desires to know the reason of everything commanded him. Let him become a fool that he may be wise ; let all his discretion be to have no discretion at all while he obeys ; and let his wisdom never appear in the matter of obedience.”<sup>1</sup>

Again, St. Bernard writing to his brethren of the spiritual things that the monk should hold precious, says : “ But these things thou wilt not be able to guard unless first thou make thyself foolish that thou mayst become wise ; to wit, discerning nothing, deciding nothing, about the things that have been commanded thee, but showing obedience with all simplicity of faith, adjudging that only to be holy and useful and wise that the law of God or the judgment of the Superior has directed.”<sup>2</sup>

Finally, St. Francis de Sales declares that “ Religious obedience, which ought to be blind, lovingly submits to do quite simply whatever is commanded, without ever thinking whether the command is well or ill given, provided that the person who gives it has the power to do so.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Bernard, *Epis. ad Fratres de Monte Dei.*, Lib. i, c. 5, sec. 14. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. clxxxiv, col. 317.

<sup>2</sup> St. Bernard, *De Ordine Vitae*, cap. ix, sec. 28. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. clxxxiv, col. 578.

<sup>3</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, xi, p. 156.



XIII. *Of Blind Obedience as an Act of Reason*

It must not be thought, however, that blind Obedience is an abdication of the intellect. If this were the case, such Obedience would be purely mechanical and without merit. St. Francis de Sales, who writes so strongly against the exercise of private judgment, is equally definite in arguing that to have or not to have opinions concerning the actions of a Superior is *per se* indifferent. Opinions are formed by the operation of the mind independent of the will, so "it is quite natural," he says, "that everyone should have his own opinions; but that does not prevent our attaining to perfection, provided we do not love them or become attached to them. For it is only *the love of our own opinions* which is infinitely contrary to perfection."<sup>1</sup>

An act of blind obedience is an act of the will, and it is an impossibility for anything to be in the will unless it has first been considered by the intellect. Therefore an act of blind obedience is an act of the intellect. In order to accomplish it, reason is called into play and argues thus :

"What I am ordered to do seems to me ill-advised, but my Superior is doubtless acting on grounds that I know nothing of, or into which it is not my business to inquire. If I knew them, it would change the apparent condition of things. Therefore my judgment, being uninformed, is not to be regarded, and I implicitly accept his judgment and obey."

What, however, must be the subject's attitude when he knows for a certain fact that his Superior is

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, xiv, p. 214.

acting without prudence ? His reason again leads him to submit his judgment on this ground : “ It may not be God’s desire that my Superior give me this direction ; but since it is given under obedience it is certainly God’s desire that I follow it, so long as it be not sin. I shall gain greater merit by submitting to that which my intellect so entirely disapproves, and I have the satisfaction of knowing that it will be an act totally devoid of self-will.”

If a Superior goes to the point of commanding what a subject believes to be impossible, the latter does not hesitate, but following the example of the Fathers of the monastic life in all ages, goes forward to make the best effort possible, counting it a thankworthy opportunity of practising humility should he fail.

This does not, however, wholly forbid one to lay before the Superior certain facts which he may be supposed to be ignorant of, provided it be done with a pure intention, and a real submission of mind and heart. In order to secure this condition of mind and heart, one should be careful never to speak on the spur of the moment, lest he thus make it impossible for the Holy Spirit to give him the proper guidance. If it seems necessary not to delay, one should pause a few moments to ask for guidance, and to offer to God beforehand what he is about to say. This will at least be security for his good intention, even if his judgment should prove poor.

It is never competent, however, for a Religious to argue with a Superior, and clean contrary to both the letter and the spirit of Obedience, the command being

once given, for him to say "I cannot," however impossible the thing may seem.

Discussing the spirit of obedience that prevailed among the Egyptian monks, Cassian says: "When impossibilities are commanded them, they undertake them with such devotion as to strive with all their powers and without the slightest hesitation, to fulfil and carry them out; and out of reverence for the Superior, they do not even consider whether or not a command is an impossibility."<sup>1</sup>

We may not be able to rise to the complete and spontaneous obedience of the ancients, but we should ever have in mind the words of St. Teresa, spoken out of the experience of many years of heroic devotion to her vocation: "I know the power of obedience to make things easy that seem impossible."<sup>2</sup> The true Religious strives for the humility which "while not daring to think itself capable of anything, believes obedience capable of everything."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, iv, x. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 162-3.

<sup>2</sup> St. Teresa, *The Interior Castle*, Preface.

<sup>3</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Letters*, cii (Lear).

## CHAPTER XI

### RELIGIOUS RULE

#### I. *Of the Significance of Rule*

THE essential necessity of a Rule for those who have entered upon the Religious State, is implied in the ordinary terminology of the monastic life. Professed Religious are commonly called *Regulars*; and the life often spoken of as the *Regular Life*, from the Latin word *Regula*, which means a Rule, a standard, something by which one is to measure himself to see if he conforms to the ideal set before him.

In the East, the like idea prevailed, and the word *Κανών* (*Canon*), which is the Greek equivalent for *Regula*, came to be applied in the same way to those who lived under a Rule. The term has a wide use both in East and West. St. Chrysostom and other Fathers call nuns *Canonesses*, which is the same as to say *female Regulars*.

At the present day, when the general term *Rule* is used, it is meant to include the Rule proper, the Constitutions, and the Custumal.

The distinction between *Rule* and *Constitutions* is given by St. Francis de Sales as follows: " Rules in Religion point out the means of becoming perfect in God's service, and Constitutions indicate how these



means are to be used. For example, such a Rule prescribes that prayers be sedulously attended to, and the Constitutions particularize the time, the quantity and the quality of the prayers that are to be performed. . . . In brief, the Rule tells what is to be done, and the Constitutions how to do it."<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen in considering the subject of Obedience, the Religious is not held strictly to go beyond his Rule ; and yet it is well to remember that every good Rule is formed on the principle that a recent writer has described as underlying the ancient Rule of St. Pachomius. "The fundamental idea of his Rule was to establish a moderate level of observance which might be obligatory upon all ; and then leave it open to each,—and, indeed, to encourage each,—*to go beyond the fixed minimum, according as he was prompted by his strength, his courage, and his zeal.*"<sup>2</sup> He would be a lukewarm Religious who was content never to offer God anything beyond the minimum that his vow required of him.

## II. *Of the Obligation of Rule*

Religious Rules do not ordinarily bind under pain of sin, either mortal or venial. It is, however, the practically unanimous opinion of the authorities that when a duty is laid upon Religious, it being explicitly

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, Preface. *The Observances of Barnwell Priory* place Rule and Constitutions in the same relation as the Decalogue and the words of the Prophets, and as the words of the Gospel and the writings of the Apostles. See Clark, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Butler (quoted by Morison), *Lausiac History of Palladius*, i, p. 233, seq.

stated that it is required "*in virtue of holy obedience*," a failure to obey involves a grave degree of sin, since the refractory person explicitly refuses to give the obedience to which his vows oblige him.

If under ordinary circumstances, infraction of Rule constituted mortal or venial sin, the Religious State would then be more perilous than the secular state, since instead of being a help against sin it would offer constant opportunities for sin from which men in the world would be free.<sup>1</sup>

The above statement must be understood to mean that infraction of the Rule *per se* does not constitute sin. For example, if a Rule bound a Religious to be in choir at noon, absence from choir at that hour would not be a sin merely because of the terms of the Rule.

The reason for this is that the Rule is not of divine, but of human institution, and it cannot make that to be sin which is not sin according to the divine decree.

A wilful infraction of Rule, however, is a violation of an obligation which one took upon himself, and the opinion of the authorities is that such an act rarely fails to constitute some kind and degree of sin. To break wilfully, or through sloth, a Rule which has union with God as its end, can rarely be free from guilt. Scripture is full of strong teaching concerning the obligation to pay the vows that are made to God, and everywhere it is implied that "He will hold to strict account those who fail to pay Him that which they have vowed.

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 9.

So he who fails to observe his Rule in any matter that involves a violation of poverty, chastity or obedience, sins in a degree corresponding to the seriousness of the violation. We say that he sins in a degree corresponding to the seriousness of the violation, because no act can have a greater degree of guilt than the intrinsic seriousness of the act involves. No sort of obligation expressed in the Rule could make an act to be mortal sin which did not possess sufficient seriousness of matter to be mortal sin regardless of the Rule.

It is scarcely necessary to add that when the Rule enjoins what is already a divine precept, violation of this injunction involves a double sin : first, that of breaking the divine precept, and, second, that of violating the vow made to God. In this case, the sin arises not in virtue of the Rule itself, but in virtue of God's command and of the vow.<sup>1</sup>

The theologians teach that a Religious can, in practice, rarely violate his Rule deliberately without sin. St. Thomas refers to carelessness as well as to anger, and voluptuousness, as being causes of such violations, when the infraction of the Rule in itself may be of the lightest possible character.<sup>2</sup>

Gautrelet says of this opinion of the theologians : " The reason for this decision is that ordinarily, at least, one violates a Rule only from some wrong motive. Vanity, sensuality, human respect, curiosity, lightness, idleness, are the motives which oftenest keep us from observing our Rule. Now if the motive

<sup>1</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*, 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 9.

or the principle of the action is evil, it is evident that the action itself cannot be good." <sup>1</sup>

The foregoing considerations concerning what is allowable short of actual sin in violating the Rule, are not to be qualified, but the weakness of human nature being what it is, it behoves the Religious to beware how he takes deliberate advantage of God's goodness and pity. For, says Gautrelet, "the disposition of a Religious to observe only what is imposed under pain of grave sin cannot be excused, for although, strictly speaking, it may suffice for tending towards perfection to employ the means absolutely necessary for that end—*i.e.*, the vows, and the rules that are binding under pain of mortal sin—the disposition to avoid only grave faults and to allow oneself all venial faults would shortly expose one to the danger of committing mortal faults, and from contempt of venial sin one would be led to contempt of mortal sin, and of perfection itself inasmuch as it is the goal of the Religious State. This disposition is therefore regarded by theologians as ordinarily involving grave sin."<sup>2</sup>

### III. *Of Violation of Rule Through Contempt*

Dealing with the obligation of Rule, especially in matters that are not of divine precept, St. Thomas says: "As for those things that go beyond the necessity of the precept, they do not bind under mortal sin in breaking them unless it be done through contempt; because the Religious is not bound to be perfect, but to be always striving for and tending

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, p. 51.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. i, p. 195.



towards perfection ; and the despising of perfection is opposed to this.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas distinguishes between what belongs to the *substance* of poverty, chastity and obedience, violations of which he teaches may extend to the degree of mortal sin, and what are mere regulations in the Rule, directions for exterior observance, etc., which cannot be mortal sin “ unless done through contempt of the Rule, which would indeed be directly opposed to one’s profession.”<sup>2</sup> So by disobeying any portion of his Rule a Religious may “ sin venially, or even mortally, if it be through carelessness, voluptuousness or contempt.”<sup>3</sup>

All theologians agree with this teaching of St. Thomas. The grave question is, What constitutes contempt ? “ He sins through contempt when his will rejects anything laid upon him by law or Rule, and when he proceeds to act against the law or Rule. But on the other hand, when anyone is led by some particular cause, as, *e.g.*, concupiscence or anger to do something in violation of law or Rule, he sins not through contempt, even if he does the same thing many times, from these or similar causes. But frequent sinning disposes one to contempt, as is said in Proverbs xviii. 3, ‘ When the wicked cometh, there cometh also contempt.’ ”<sup>4</sup>

In his *Spiritual Conferences* given to the Sisters of the Visitation, St. Francis de Sales amplifies the teaching of St. Thomas with such clearness that we cannot do better than present his statement *in extenso*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 9.   <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*   <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*   <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, p. 7, *seq.*

“ If anyone,” he says, “ should wilfully and intentionally violate the Constitutions, with contempt or with scandal, either of the Sisters or of strangers, she would without doubt commit a great offence ; for it would be impossible to exempt from fault one who disgraces or dishonours the things of God, contradicts her profession, overthrows the Congregation, and dissipates the fruits of good example and of good odour which she should produce towards her neighbour. Voluntary contempt of this kind would be followed at length by some great chastisement from heaven, and particularly by the privation of the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are usually taken away from such as abandon their good purposes, and leave the path in which God has placed them.

“ Now contempt of the Constitutions, as well as that of all good works, may be distinguished by the following considerations :

“ That person is guilty of it who violates or neglects some rule, not only voluntarily but with some special purpose, because if he violates it through inadvertence, forgetfulness, or the surprise of some passion, that is a different thing ; for contempt includes in itself a deliberate will which purposely determines to act in that manner. Therefore it follows that whoever violates the Rule, or disobeys through contempt, not only disobeys, but intends to disobey ; he not only commits an act of disobedience, but he commits it with the purpose of being disobedient. It is forbidden to eat out of meal-times ; a sister eats some plums, some apricots, or other fruit ;

she violates the rule and is disobedient. Now if she eats, attracted by the pleasure she expects to receive therefrom, she disobeys, not out of disobedience, but out of greediness ; but if she eats because she sets no value upon the Rule, and will not either regard it, or submit herself to it, she disobeys out of contempt and disobedience.

“ It also follows that whoever disobeys in consequence of a temptation, or through the force of some sudden passion, would be glad to be able to satisfy his passion without disobeying, and that while he takes pleasure, for instance, in eating, he is at the same time sorry to be disobedient : in which case the disobedience follows or accompanies the deed, but in the other the disobedience precedes it and is both the cause and the motive of it, although through greediness. . . .

“ Now this formal disobedience, and this contempt of good and holy things, is never without some sin, at least venial, even when the things themselves are only counsels. For although it is quite possible without any sin to choose other things rather than to follow holy counsels, it is impossible to neglect them through contempt without guilt ; because, though we are not bound to follow everything that is good, we are bound to honour and esteem it, and therefore with still more reason to avoid despising and depreciating it.

“ Further, it follows that whoever violates the Rule and Constitutions out of contempt, considers them despicable and useless, which is in itself great presumption and temerity ; or if he considers them to be

useful, and yet will not submit himself to them, then he gives up his former purpose to the injury of his neighbour, to whom he gives scandal and bad example ; while he breaks the engagement and promise he made to the community, and brings disorder into a religious house, and these are very great faults."

#### IV. *Of the Signs of Contempt of Rule*

St. Francis de Sales gives us four signs by which contempt of the Rule or of a Superior's direction may be recognized.

1. When, on being corrected, one shows scorn and no repentance.

2. When he continues without showing any desire or will to amend.

3. When he complains that the Rule or command is unsuitable.

4. When he endeavours to draw others into the same fault, and to quiet their fears by telling them that it is nothing, and that there is no harm in it.<sup>1</sup>

These signs are not to be applied too literally, however, but must be considered in connection with other conditions. A person may turn a Rule or directions into ridicule because of a want of esteem for him who administers it ; or he may offend, even habitually, against it through infirmity, sloth, anger, or some other form of sin ; and he may draw others into his fault in order to have the consolation of companionship in his wrongdoing.

All of these conditions would indeed be sinful, but

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Spiritual Conferences*, p. 10.



they would not be the sin of contempt for Rule or authority. Such is St. Thomas's teaching.<sup>1</sup>

One sometimes is tempted not to count it as a matter for serious consideration when he esteems but lightly certain minor points of Rule, while having regard for all the rest. The principle of contempt for authority is, however, violated as completely in a small matter as in a great ; and even the smallest degree of formal contempt is utterly destructive of the virtue of Obedience.

Furthermore, if I can allow myself to despise one point to-day, why not another to-morrow ; and so on, until my whole Rule, and the entire authority of the community, are brought into contempt ? St. Thomas warns Religious against this self-deception, showing that if the offence is small, it nevertheless disposes the will to greater offences, just as habitual venial sin creates a disposition in the soul that easily and swiftly leads on to mortal sin.<sup>2</sup>

If any want of esteem for Rule be tolerated, it might easily come about that one person in a community would despise a certain small point, a second person another, a third still another ; and so on, until the whole body of Religious law and all authority would be brought into contempt to such an extent that the community would become an abode of confusion, and many vocations be wrecked.

The only safety for one's own vocation, and for the integrity of the virtue of Obedience, is not to consider the relative value of this or that point, but to have regard solely to the principle of obedience, and to see

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 186, Art. 9.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

that it is observed under all conditions. The Apostolic principle applies to Religious Rule as well as to morals in general : " Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."<sup>1</sup>

He who allows himself to regard and disregard what he will, however small the fault, is living his life on the principle of self-will. The *principle* of Obedience is wanting, even though he may actually render Obedience, *ex animo*, in many things. *Choosing not to yield Obedience on a single point, renders it an equal act of self-choosing to obey on other points.*

#### V. *Of Dispensation from Rule*

A rule is given that it may be observed. Therefore, wise and necessary as dispensations may be at times, they are always to be regarded as abnormal. The true Religious is one who, so far from expecting and desiring dispensations, feels a regret that any condition should arise calling for them. The granting of dispensations is a concession to human weakness, or a yielding to the abnormal exigencies of time or circumstance.

We should use every endeavour to be as morally certain as possible of its necessity before applying for it, and a Superior is required to exercise equal care and judgment before granting a dispensation, remembering that each dispensation granted takes from the Religious, for the time being, the use of the instrument ordinarily employed by the divine wisdom for the working out of his perfection. He is safe in applying for dispensation who earnestly and humbly desires to

<sup>1</sup> St. James ii. 10.

observe all things appointed for him, and a wise Superior soon learns to know to whom he can allow exceptions to the Rule.

The careful Religious will always seek so to dispose his work in relation to his time that it may not be necessary for him to ask for dispensation, and he should feel bound to watchfulness in times of unusual activity or distraction lest he be unable to perform the labour assigned to him without having to ask to be dispensed from some part of his ordinary Rule.

Those who have to be dispensed should regard themselves as the unfortunate, rather than the favoured ones in the community ; and so far from envying them their brethren should look upon them with a loving sympathy, praying that they may have speedily restored to them the full use of the means appointed them for their perfection.

Herein lies much room for the exercise of humility. Pride may easily enter in to incite us to an unwise and injurious effort to maintain the mere letter of a Rule, when to accept, or even to apply for, a dispensation, may be more Christ-like, in that it would indicate an humble spirit. On the other hand, there may be ample room for the exercise of humility in cases where our judgment as to the need of a dispensation is overruled.

In connection with the subject of dispensations, a warning must be uttered against a too literal attitude. " The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."<sup>1</sup> Many a Religious who never asks for a dispensation, who is fretted when one is given him, and who per-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians iii. 6.

haps has but few faults to acknowledge in Chapter, may be failing habitually to progress in perfection because of the subtle pride that hinders him from applying to be dispensed. If we pray the Holy Spirit to give us a right judgment in the matter we need have no fear that we shall suffer spiritually, even though the use of the ordinary regimen appointed for our perfection be, for the time, suspended.

#### VI. *Of Reverence for Rule*

The Rule of a community is always to be regarded by its members with great reverence, for it is the particular instrument that God the Holy Ghost has appointed to be used for our perfection. Hence a Religious offends who thinks or speaks lightly of his Rule, for it is the sin of irreverence to regard in light fashion any means the Spirit has in His infinite wisdom seen fit to employ for our spiritual advancement. The Rule is a gift from God, and must be so regarded and cherished.

This does not imply that the Rule is perfect or infallible. Human elements are involved in it, and as in everything human there are in it weak points. We ourselves may see them, and may rightly desire and labour for changes, provided it be done in the right spirit and according to the method provided. But this makes the Rule none the less the instrument God is using, for the time being, to conform us to the likeness of Christ.

The desire for change or modification of Rule should never be indulged in order to obtain relief from the burden of certain requirements, but only



because in submission to what we believe to be the divine guidance, we have become convinced that the change would make it a more effective instrument in God's hands for our perfection.

### VII. *Of Rule as a Protection to the Precepts*

Writers on the monastic state have been accustomed to assign to Religious Rule the office which we have seen assigned to the Counsels in general, namely, that of acting as a protection to the precepts.

"God has first encompassed us," says Rodriguez, "with the rampart of His law and commandments, and He has added to this rampart the outworks of our Rules and Constitutions that all the endeavours of our enemies, with whom we are always at war, may be able only to make some breach in the first fortification; and so the law of God remaining always entire, we may be secure from all their insults. It is a great favour that God has bestowed upon us to have put us in such a state that the devil can hope even by his most violent attacks, to prevail no farther than to make us fail in our rules, the transgression of which amounts not to a venial sin; and that, at present, we have a greater scruple to violate any one of these rules than perhaps, had we remained in the world, we would have had to commit great sins."<sup>1</sup>

The same pious writer goes on to show that had we remained in the world, beyond the precincts of our Rules and Counsels, without the protection of these ever-widening circles of defence, the devil could then "undisturbed play his machines against the rampart

<sup>1</sup> Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 307.

of the law of God and perhaps make us fall into some mortal sin. But here it is not easy for him to compass what he aims at on account of the outworks against which, though he employs all his force, he cannot put us in danger of receiving any mortal wound in our soul."

#### VIII. *Of the Spirit of Strict Observance*

It has been the teaching of all spiritual writers that in violations of obedience lightness of matter does not excuse the fault, but rather renders it more blameworthy.

The Fathers taught this truth in a variety of ways. St. Augustine declares, for instance, the sin of Adam to have been the more criminal because there was no great difficulty in complying with the command of God not to eat of the forbidden fruit;<sup>1</sup> and St. Bonaventura utters a striking epigram when he says, "The more easily a thing can be performed, the more guilty we are in not performing it."<sup>2</sup>

It is the attention to the little points of the Rule that cultivate the spirit of strict observance which is at the same time the glory and the protection of the Religious State.

We can with profit refer here again to the figure of the inner citadel and the outer fortifications. The strict observance of Rule is the outworks which are the protection of the Rule itself. He who is watchful to guard that which is least, will never fail in that

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, Lib. xiv, cap. xii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xli, col. 420.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Rodriguez, *op. cit.*, Vol. iii, p. 314.

which is greater. Let not sloth or carelessness break through the outer line of defence, and the substance of the Rule will be always secure.

The good Religious, remembering his obligation always to tend towards and labour for perfection, will seek to use every means possible to attain to this perfection, which is his aim and final end. He knows that the adversary leaves no possible means unemployed to stay his progress, and if he would be as zealous in God's service as the tempter is in the service of evil, he will lose no opportunity to make himself more and more perfect.

"He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little,"<sup>1</sup> and he who would make certain progress must, by loving the small things of his Rule, make progress little by little. The writings of the Saints are full of maxims on this point, but none is more comprehensive than St. Francis' simple injunction to Angelique Arnauld : "Never allow yourself intentionally to set aside the Rule."<sup>2</sup>

The truth that we have repeated so often must be remembered here. We do not keep the Rule merely for the Rule's sake ; it is but an instrument, a means, in the hands of the Holy Spirit for the attainment of the end, which is our perfection. This God-ordained instrument must be faithfully used ; this and this only is the business of the Religious. Think not of the particular measure of progress in perfection we may make in a given time. We are unable to estimate this. It belongs to the results which are in

<sup>1</sup> Ecclus. xix. 1.

<sup>2</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Letters*, lxxxv (Lear).

God's hands, not in ours. Our responsibility begins and ends with faithfully using the means He supplies.

Strict observance on the part of the Religious ensures his reaching the goal. "If you are steadfast in what is external, by degrees the interior spirit will follow." This doctrine of St. Francis de Sales is manifestly true, for two reasons. *First*, judging from the natural, the merely psychological standpoint, it is impossible for one to observe strictly and perseveringly any rule of action without gradually becoming interiorly conformed to the spirit of that rule. This is true in all the affairs of life, secular or religious, and whether the end sought be good or evil.

*Secondly*, in the case of a spiritual Rule, the end of which is nearer approach to and union with God, every act of conformity to it, however small, is in the nature of a sacramental. The divine promise is: "Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you."<sup>1</sup> If we by strict observance of the most minute point of our Rule, have the implicit intention of nearer approach to God, that particular observance becomes to us an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace that God will give us in reward for our obedience. So, little by little, through strict and faithful employment of the means God gives us, we shall be conformed to its inner spirit, which is conformity to God Himself.

<sup>1</sup> St. James iv. 8.



## CHAPTER XII

### RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS

#### I. *Of Religious Superiors in General*

ST. JEROME says: "The Superior of a community should be feared as a master, and loved as a father,"<sup>1</sup> and in a sermon doubtfully attributed to St. Augustine, but of very great antiquity, we find the statement that "the Superior is the vicar of Christ in the monastery";<sup>2</sup> while Valuy states in a single sentence the whole spirit and principle of Religious Rule when he says: "To love and to be loved, these two words summarize the entire science of good government."<sup>3</sup>

These observations suggest to us the mutual relation of a Superior and his subjects. We have dealt with some aspects of this matter in the chapter on Obedience, where we considered the duty of the subject towards his Superior; it is important now to consider the duty of the Superior to his subjects and to his community in general.

<sup>1</sup> St. Jerome, *Epis.* cxxv, 15, *Ad Rusticum*. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxii, col. 1081.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, (?) *Sermo. de Obedientia*. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xl, col. 1345.

<sup>3</sup> Valuy, *Du Gouvernement des Communautés Religieuses*, Livre iv, ch. iv, 1.

It was made clear in our discussion of Religious Profession that the donation by a subject of himself to his community is not a gratuitous act, but constitutes his part in a binding contract ; and while he is bound to obey, the community is, on its part, equally bound to support, train, and govern him. It is to Superiors that the community entrusts the fulfilment of its obligation to those whom it receives as its members.

## II. *Of the Qualities of a Superior*

A man's work is the expression of his character, or as the proverb finely phrases it, *Operatio sequitur esse*. The first thing, therefore, to be considered in relation to the Religious Superior is his character and attainments, for along whatever line and in whatever degree they develop, so will his government be ; and on this depends the welfare of his community.

1. A Superior must have a full grasp of the spirit of the community over which he is called to preside. He must be the embodiment of the Rule, and must have lived long enough under its discipline to know experimentally, as well as by the traditions of his Order, how every requirement of it applies under the varying conditions that necessarily arise where many persons are living and working together.

2. He must be a man who has had wide experience in spiritual things, both in his own inner life and in dealing with others ; and he must be able to recognize spiritual capacity in others, and know how to develop and use it.

3. Discretion and prudence are among the primary

virtues with which a Superior must be armed. We have seen that as far as his obediences are concerned the subject is not to exercise these virtues. If the subject is not permitted to exercise them, and the Superior is wanting in them, confusion must ensue.

4. Above all, the Superior must be humble, and this humility finds its truest expression in a keen sense of unfitness, and in a shrinking from the weight of responsibility that office places upon those who hold it. The most unfit person for Superiorship is he who would desire it. Readers of the life of St. Anselm will recall the scene in the Chapter-house at Bec, when this great servant of God was chosen abbot. "He burst into tears," says his biographer, "and with a cry that harrowed every heart, fell on his face upon the floor, praying them and conjuring them in the name of Almighty God, and by the bowels of their compassion—if human hearts they had—and as they hoped for the mercy of God, to take pity on him and stop short here, and quit him of such a burden."<sup>1</sup>

While exacting the obedience of all, the Superior must at the same time consider the wishes of all. His power of requiring obedience does not give him the right to be arbitrary. He must be ready to take counsel of those whose place it is to give it, and with an open mind to consider the advice given. He is set to be greatest in order that he may be the servant of all. Says St. Basil: "The Superior must not be unduly exalted by his office, lest he fail to obtain the blessing that is promised to the humble, or by his pride fall into the condemnation of the devil, but

<sup>1</sup> Martin Rule: *Life and Times of St. Anselm*, Vol. i, p. 215.

rather let him be assured that the charge of the many is the service of the many."<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine carries on the same idea concerning the Superior, saying : "Let her count herself happy, not in exercising the power which rules, but in practising the love which serves " ; adding, " In honour in the sight of men let her be raised above you, but in fear in the sight of God let her be, as it were, beneath your feet."<sup>2</sup>

The fact of the humility that must attend upon the office of Superior involves as a necessary corollary, a very solemn obligation for the subject. " Therefore ought you," writes St. Augustine, " to be more tractable, having compassion not only on yourselves but also on her, for the loftier her station, the greater her danger."<sup>3</sup>

5. He must have a close union with God, and be of such mental habit as will enable him promptly and unreservedly to refer all questions to the judgment of the Holy Spirit the moment they arise. The sustained motive of his life must be of a distinctly supernatural character, so that he may be able to decide everything according to God, and not according to man. The motto on his shield must be "*Pro Deo, per Deum, secundum Deum.*"

6. A Superior must be wholly unselfish, filled with the charity that " seeketh not her own." Above all others in the community, he must not desire his own will. He must in all things place himself second to all. Like a father sacrificing himself for the good of his

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusiis Tractatae*, 30.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, *Epis.* ccxi, 15. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxiii, col. 964-5.

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, *ibid.*, col. 965.



child, so must the Superior be to his spiritual children, and that with so joyous, unselfish and generous a spirit that he is unconscious that any sacrifice is being made.

7. He must promote a strict but reasonable observance of the Rule by his actions even more than by his words. It was said of a certain Religious Superior : " If you would know what the Rule prescribes for any particular hour, go and see what she is doing at that hour." The daily life of the Superior should be an epitome of the Rule.

8. He requires a largeness of mind that will enable him to keep all requirements of the Rule in their proper proportion. He must yield no jot of principle, and with courage " the Superior is to apply remedies without flinching to those who are ailing,"<sup>1</sup> and yet know how to administer the Rule with that wise flexibility which will secure its application in its fulness to every one of the varying dispositions and temperaments that he is called upon to govern.

9. No one in the community is required so carefully to guard his affections as the Superior. If particular friendships amongst subjects lead to the wreck of vocations, like friendships indulged by the Superior lead to the wreck of communities. He should with great care repress any manifestation of greater esteem or affection for one than for another.

### III. *Of the Right Mingling of Mildness and Strength in Religious Government*

The government of a Religious community depends for its real efficacy on the right mingling of strength

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius Tractatae*, 52.

and mildness in the character and policy of the Superior. The proper harmony of these qualities produces a wise and good government, calculated to lead souls in the way of Perfection to which they are vowed.

It is not difficult to be firm ; it is not difficult to be mild. It is difficult to combine these qualities in right proportion, so that, on the one hand, offenders may not go unrebuked, and, on the other, weaker souls be not rebuffed and discouraged at the demands made upon them. In seeking to balance these virtues the one against the other, the danger lies in permitting firmness to harden into an unloving rigour, or mildness to degenerate into laxity and weakness. In order to learn how to avoid this Charybdis on the one side, and Scylla on the other, let us take for our instructor one of the greatest Religious Superiors of modern times, Claudio Aquaviva, who out of his wide experience gives us a long list of conditions under which failure may easily appear.

Religious government, he says, is likely to be harsh and painful under the following circumstances :—

1. When the thing commanded is difficult and unsupportable as the result of a Superior's lack of judgment or of discretion.

2. When a subject is required to fulfil an obedience which through unfeigned physical, or spiritual incapacity he is unable to do.

3. When the command is given in a despotic manner, especially if there are signs of anger on the part of the Superior.

4. If a command is pressed at a time when the

subject is not well-disposed towards it, without giving him time and means to change his disposition.

5. Where small things are exacted with the same rigour as great ones, or even more forcibly, merely to accord with a Superior's personal wish or taste.

6. If a Superior rejects at once a subject's reasons or excuses, instead of first listening kindly.

7. Where a Superior permits himself to appear suspicious of a subject, and is never content with anything he does.

8. If a Superior interprets everything relating to a subject in its worst sense. This, says Fr. Aquaviva, is in reality a very grave matter.

9. If the Superior looks only to the ultimate perfection of his community without having compassion on the spiritual infirmities of individuals.

10. When he gives commands so that they cannot be understood, in order to make opportunity for a rebuke.

11. When immediately, without allowing himself time for consideration, he refuses requests made.

12. If, in cases of doubt, his interpretations are always rigid and scrupulous.

Should a Superior fail through too much rigour, however, he will find himself in the painful and humiliating situation of not being able to apologize or make any open amends for his fault. For, says St. Augustine, " If the necessity of administering correction had forced any severe words out of your mouth in reprimanding your inferiors, though you should perceive that you had exceeded due bounds in so doing, it is not required that you ask pardon of

your inferiors, lest by paying too great a regard to humility, you should weaken the authority you ought to retain in governing your subjects.”<sup>1</sup> The presence of the painful possibility of doing a wrong that one may not be able to right, should make a Superior doubly watchful to avoid such a fault.

It is to be noted that it is said that apology is not *required* in such cases. There may be subjects so true and humble that authority would not be endangered by abasing oneself before them, but this counsel, nevertheless, as a general rule, is to be observed.

The conditions that render Religious government weak and relaxed are reduced by the same authority to the following points :—

1. In regulating the community, to give one’s attention only to those things that are grave and liable to cause scandal, having no concern for anything else.

2. To be lenient in regard to the observance of rules, as though they were to be imposed always with reserve.

3. To revoke readily or to permit neglect of what has been commanded because of a slight repugnance on the part of the subject.

4. To allow frequency of a fault in a subject to blind him to its seriousness.

5. While judging and disapproving, to fail to warn or rebuke the guilty for fear of grieving him or disposing him against oneself. “Undoubtedly,” says our authority, “there would be in this case reason to

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *Epis.* ccxi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxiii, col. 964.



fear the application of St. Gregory's words : ' When by speaking you can correct an evil, take heed lest your silence be not an approbation.' "

6. To allow a questionable course of action merely for the consolation of individuals ; from fear that they will murmur ; or from regard to the authority of some ; from friendship ; or from any personal consideration.

7. Closing the eyes to faults, failing to correct them, and neglecting precautions against the repetition of the fault, in order to save others a little pain.

8. Under the pretext of humility and condescension to permit oneself and one's words to be disregarded.

9. To refrain through timidity, or human respect, from warning and counselling a subject, except feebly and for form's sake, so as to produce no impression, and as though the Superior's aim was only to save his own conscience.

10. To be content with giving warning, and to believe that he has satisfied his obligation by merely showing displeasure, without employing efficacious means to correct the abuse, and like Eli to think his duty done when he says : " I hear of your evil dealings." <sup>1</sup>

The profound Religious legislator, whose wisdom we are following, sums up the whole matter of rule and discipline in a single sentence : " We must be strong in pursuing the end, and mild in the manner of pursuit." This is but saying in a few words what St.

<sup>1</sup> I Samuel ii. 23.

Basil wrote for his monks in the fourth century :  
“ The Superior is to apply remedies without flinching to those who are ailing ; so also,” he continues,  
“ those who are thus treated should not receive their punishments in enmity, or consider as a tyranny the kindly care which is directed to the salvation of their souls.”<sup>1</sup>

Continuing his summary, Aquaviva says, “ As to what shall be granted or refused, when it is a question of correcting and rebuking, of punishing faults, or giving a command, of stirring up inferiors, that they may attain to a higher degree of virtue and perfection, it is necessary to give careful consideration to persons, and their strength of mind and body ; to choose favourable moments ; to employ exhortations ; above all to manifest great charity as well as zeal, and to wait with patience and forbearance. And yet inferiors must not be suffered to claim impunity, to do or omit things at their pleasure, following their own inclinations, forming the habit of judging and acting contrary to the orders and judgment of their Superiors, and placing rules in the rank of counsels, as if it were praiseworthy to observe them but not wrong to fail to do so. . . .

“ Inferiors, on their side, are not to call love and zeal for perfection and for the continual progress of religious discipline, rigour and harshness, nor demand a mildness that would be a fatal indulgence. They should understand that many things which would be an obstacle to their perfection must be refused them, and many things that tend to the glory of God and

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius Tractatae*, 52.

the common welfare must be imposed upon them, even against their will. One who wishes to be directed and reformed is not to flee from corrections and penances, and it is no kindness if a physician by his negligence allows danger to increase for fear of distressing his patient. Finally, the indulgence of Superiors is an accusation of our lukewarmness."

"Mildness does not consist in following the will and the desires of inferiors in all cases. Its effects are rather, as has been said, not to show harshness or wrath or agitation in reprimands, but paternal seriousness, and compassion which is mild and tender, yet lively and strong. The Superior should not appear to desire to humiliate when rebuking, but to obey necessity through zeal for the common welfare, and for the good of the very individual who is reprov'd. He should refuse with a feeling of sorrow that which could not be permitted, being ready to grant requests when it is possible and right to do so; and should not correct imperfections to the point of drawing blood, so to speak, by pressing too harshly. . . .

"Finally, mildness consists in treating our subordinates with feelings of charity, so that they will without uneasiness confide their temptations to us as to a mother, and that they will thus receive our corrections and all that comes from us as inspired by love and without bitterness of heart, although perhaps with repugnance of feeling."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These extracts from Aquaviva are taken from Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, pp. 165-7.

IV. *Of the Duty of Superiors to Subjects*

St. Basil has told us that "the charge of the many is the service of the many."<sup>1</sup> Since the Superior, therefore, is to be the servant of all, his obligations to his subjects are more numerous than those of the latter to him. The subject has set before him a very simple duty. Let him in all things be simply obedient, and he accomplishes all that God appoints for him. But the Superior finds himself confronted with a complexity of duties that requires the constant exercise of a consecrated discretion and judgment to recognize and fulfil.

The chief duty of a Superior is to use his utmost effort to promote the spiritual welfare of his subjects, and to urge them on the way of Perfection, which is the object they had in entering Religion.

1. The Superior finds it laid upon his conscience to see that the members of his community are well instructed in all they should know as Christians and Religious. It is a fatal mistake to take it for granted that those who are in Religion are necessarily well instructed in the facts of the Catholic faith, and in the duties that devolve upon them as Christians.

It is also of primary importance that they understand the dogmatic and technical principles of the Religious Life. It is pitiful to see, as one sometimes does, Religious who have been in the life for years, and who yet have little conception of the definite obligations of the Counsels they have vowed to follow ; who are totally ignorant of the finer demands of Religious Obedience, who are in their ignorance

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius Tractatae*, 30.



habitually violating the virtue of Poverty, and in whose daily walk Chastity exerts no deeper influence than it did when they were living in the world. And all this because they have not been taught that these virtues take on a different colour and are of another application in the life of the Religious from what they could possibly be to one living in the world.

If any such conditions as are described above exist in a community, the Superior can in no wise be acquitted of grave blame, either for cowardice or neglect. He cannot excuse himself because of the pressure of manifold duties. His first duty is to see that his subjects are so rightly instructed that they may be able to fulfil their primary obligation of tending always to perfection. He is "responsible for the evil which is done through his fault, and for the good which is left undone through his neglect."<sup>1</sup>

2. Superiors are bound to reprove and even to punish their subjects both for violations of their rule and for neglect of their Christian duties. According to many authorities they are bound under pain of mortal sin to give such correction, even when the faults themselves are only venial, if they are of such a character as would result in notable relaxation of discipline and consequent hurt to souls and to the community at large. St. Basil speaks with great vigour against the weak Superior who, he says, "will condescend, or rather degrade himself, to the passions" of the imperfect Religious. On account of his pusillanimity, he avers, the subject will have

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, p. 169.

"endured the conflict of renunciation all in vain."<sup>1</sup> Further, a Superior is not only bound to correct such faults, but he must keep himself informed as to the conduct of those under his government, and to assure himself positively that there is nothing reprehensible in it. Without this care, faults are certain to go unrebuked, and because they are easily concealed, the impunity they enjoy will bring in its train more numerous and graver derelictions.

"But," adds Père Gautrelet, whose teaching we are here following, "the Superior is to strive less to punish the faults of his inferiors than to destroy the evil principle that produces them. Correction and penances are really useful only when they have the effect of healing the soul."<sup>2</sup>

This idea of the discipline of healing has always found a place in the teaching of Religious masters. St. Basil says: "Correction should be applied to the wrongdoer after the manner of the physician, who is not angry with his patient, but who fights against the disease. Thus the vice must be attacked and the infirmity of the soul corrected, if necessary, by a somewhat severe regimen. For example, pride will be corrected by ordering the practice of humility; foolish talking by silence; immoderate sleep by wakefulness in prayer; slothfulness by work; greediness by abstinence from food; discontent by separation from the rest of the brethren."<sup>3</sup>

But correction should always be applied with dis-

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *De Renunciatione Saeculi*, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. ii, p. 170.

<sup>3</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius Tractatae*, 51.

cretion. St. Francis de Sales requires of his Superior that "she shall not correct them on the spot, nor before others, but lovingly in private, unless the faults should be of such a nature as to require immediate reproof for the edification of the observers, and in this case she shall so contrive that in blaming the fault, she leave not the faulty without support, aiming indeed at being truly feared but much more at being loved."<sup>1</sup>

3. From the circumstance of his large power over his subjects, the Superior is called upon to exercise peculiar generosity. The subject, from the sacred nature of his vow of Obedience, is in nearly every instance debarred from complaint. Arbitrary rulings on the part of a Superior, or want of consideration, can easily become habitual, as, in most cases, no remonstrance can be offered by which he might be brought to realize his fault. While in most communities Superiors can be called to account by constitutional means, nevertheless this would only be resorted to in the most extreme case, and the more conscientious his subjects are, the less likely they would be to initiate such a course. The good Religious is willing to suffer much rather than bring accusations.

4. Above all other duties the Superior is required to pray assiduously for those under his direction. To the end that this may be the more efficacious, he is recommended to give some little thought daily to the state of his subjects, that his intercessions may be the more intelligently directed. In his prayers he is

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, xxix.

to consider not only their faults, but their individual aspirations and endeavours after Perfection, that he may thus help them not only to purge out sin, but also to run the more swiftly in the way of God's commandments.

*V. Of the Responsibilities of Superiors as Interpreted by the Fathers*

We cannot better conclude our consideration of Religious Superiors than by sending the reader to the teaching of the two great patriarchs of monasticism, east and west, St. Basil the Great and St. Benedict.

St. Basil describes the duties of the Superior in brief terms, but there is no mistaking the spirit in which he sets forth the profound responsibilities of those who are set to rule in God's vineyard.

"He who is entrusted with the charge of all," he says, "must remember that he is to give an account for each. For if one of the brethren fall into sin, and is not told by the Superior of God's judgment ; or if he persist in his error, and is not instructed in the way of amendment by him, his blood will be required of him."<sup>1</sup> Again : "Before God he will be as a minister of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God, fearing always lest he should say or do anything contrary to the divine will and so be found a false witness of God, or be guilty of sacrilege, either by introducing that which is against the teaching of the Lord, or by omitting that which is pleasing to Him. In his dealing with his brethren, even as a nurse cherisheth her own children, so he will be eager to give to each one

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius Tractatae*, 25.



not only the Gospel of God, but even his own life that thereby God may be pleased and the whole community benefited.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Benedict, the patriarch of monasticism in the west, gathers up the teaching of those who went before him, in the second Chapter of the Holy Rule, the greatest legislative document that Christian monasticism has ever produced. His teaching, we are told, was strongly influenced by St. Basil’s Rules, which he knew through a Latin digest made by Rufinus.<sup>2</sup>

Every Superior, whatever the grade or extent of his authority, should read his words with fear and trembling before God ; and every Religious subject who reads them should find himself driven to earnest intercession for those set in authority over him, lest he himself, through failure to pray as he ought, be held of God as a partaker of the shortcomings of those who are set to watch for his soul.

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Brevius Tractatae*, 98.

<sup>2</sup> Morison, *St. Basil and His Rule*, p. 18, note.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE DIVINE OFFICE

#### I. *Of the Antiquity of the Divine Office*

It is not pertinent to the present work to give a history of the Divine Office. Those who wish to study its development will find an excellent account of it in Battifol's *History of the Roman Breviary*, a work that should find a place in every monastic library. Shorter articles may be consulted in Addis & Arnold's *Catholic Dictionary*, and in the *Catholic Encyclopædia*, and the second and third books of Cassian's *Institutes* are devoted to a full account of the Monastic Office as it was rendered among the Egyptian monks of his day (A.D. 395).

Suffice it to say that some form of the Office goes back to the earliest days of the Church, the Egyptian monks declaring that theirs was delivered to them by an angel.<sup>1</sup> A Religious community without an Office has been practically unknown in any age, although the recitation of the Office is not an essential element of the Religious State.

<sup>1</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, Lib. ii, cap. v. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 84, *seq.*

II. *Of the Principle of the Divine Office*

The principle that underlies the universal custom of saying the Divine Office is clear. The necessary activities of human life often render it difficult for men to do more than is requisite to fulfil the divine precept concerning prayer. Therefore in order that a ceaseless offering of the sacrifice of prayer on the part of man may not be wanting, certain ones are called out from among men to give their lives, unhindered and undistracted, to this special work.

God calls others to serve Him in this or that trade or profession. The trade of the Religious is prayer. He is called to a vicarial office, to stand before God continually as the representative of his brethren in the world. It is the ancient story of Moses and Joshua. One contended for God in the valley, while the other lifted up his hands in prayer on the mount ; both being necessary to the triumph of God's cause against His enemies.

As sympathetic co-operation secures better results in other spheres of human activity, so it is in the labour of the Religious. Therefore the Holy Spirit has inspired those who are called to this special service to associate themselves together in communities for the purpose of offering the perpetual sacrifice of prayer.

In order to secure regularity, and systematic form and expression, in this work for which the Religious is set apart, the Divine Office is ordained, to be said together wherever possible by the brethren. In it the Religious fulfils, as he fulfils nowhere else, his obligation of prayer, his duty of entering in before

God to offer prayer and praise seven times a day as the official representative of his brethren throughout the world.

His representative capacity is witnessed to in the form of the Office itself. Whether he recites it in choir with his brethren, or alone in the solitude of his cell, the form set for him to use is a plural. With the dawning day, he sings :

Now that the daylight fills the sky,  
*We* lift *our* hearts to God on high,  
That He in all *we* do or say  
Would keep *us* free from harm to-day.

All through the day, hour after hour, the same note prevails, until amid the gathering darkness of the night he stands again before the Divine Presence on behalf of his brethren with the prophet's cry upon his lips : "Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of *us*, and *we* are called by Thy Name ; leave *us* not, O Lord *our* God."<sup>1</sup>

The main Catholic doctrine that underlies the notion of the Divine Office is that of the Communion of Saints, the oneness of all faithful souls in the Body of Christ, "which is the Church."<sup>2</sup>

This brings us to another aspect of our study. Throughout the whole Church—on earth, in purgatory, in heaven—the praise that is ascending to God is one praise. The Divine Office, sung in the humblest choir, or said by some lonely missionary on his solitary journeyings, is as much an integral part of the Church's praise as are the hymns of the Redeemed in glory. It is a part of the praises of

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah xiv. 9.    <sup>2</sup> Colossians i. 24.



heaven, and he who says his Office devoutly in this life, is doing, under earthly conditions, precisely what he will be doing in the heavenly places when by God's good grace he comes there. Time and space count for naught ; they are no barrier in the Kingdom of God. We are as much at one in our praise and prayer with the seraph before the Throne as we are with the brother who occupies the stall next to us in the choir.

These considerations teach us the dignity, the solemnity, of the Divine Office, worthy to be called by St. Benedict in the Holy Rule, the *Opus Dei*, the Work of God, before which, he says, nothing is to be preferred—*nihil operi Dei praeponatur*.<sup>1</sup>

The world counts this work of praise the smallest part of our life. The Religious knows that it is the greatest. The corporal works of mercy, splendid and Christ-like as they are, are but relative. That is to say, they exist only in relation to the present fallen condition of man. The work of praise transcends all earthly conditions, in that it is the ultimate work of creation. When all is brought to perfection, final and complete, the Divine Praises will be the one work that will go on in unbroken progress and power for eternity.

Those Religious who engage in corporal works of mercy, realizing this, perform their works with gladness, assured that they are thereby contributing to the great restoration ; but when the hour arrives for the Divine Office they hasten to the choir, rejoicing that here for a little time they are to be accorded the

<sup>1</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 43.

privilege of anticipating the coming time when all need of the quality of mercy having passed away, the perfect work of praise will be theirs in the fulness of the Beatific Vision.

### III. *Of the Perfect Office*

Before entering upon the recitation of the Divine Office, we pray : " Open Thou my lips, O Lord, to bless Thy Holy Name, cleanse my heart from all vain, evil and wandering thoughts, enlighten my understanding, enkindle my affections, that I may say this Office with attention and devotion, and may so be meet to be heard before the presence of Thy Divine Majesty."

This, in substance, is a prayer for the grace to say a perfect Office. The petition we here offer embraces all that we are taught constitutes a worthy rendering of praise in honour of God.

The perfect Office is said to include three things : (1) The *Officium Oris*, (2) The *Officium Mentis*, and (3) The *Officium Cordis*.

1. *Of the " Officium Oris," or the Devotion of the Body.* The *Officium Oris* (the Office of the Lips) is the term used to describe the outward worship of God that is paid by the body, which must have its equal part with the intellect and the affections, if the integrity of worship is to be complete. " For ye are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's."<sup>1</sup>

There must be an exact, careful rendering of the very words that the Church has appointed for the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians vi. 20.

expression of the praise and prayer of her people. The Divine Office is definitely a vocal, not a mental, prayer, so that the mental reading does not suffice.

Care must be taken by the two sides of the choir not to overlap each other. The psalms and other parts of the Office should be said with such deliberation and such proper pauses between the verses that one voice without losing a word would be able to join with both sides of the choir through the entire Office.

Billuart quotes the Council of Basle as giving the direction that the Office is to be said, "Not in the throat nor between the teeth, nor by eating and clipping the words and sentences, but reverently, by distinctly pronouncing the words."<sup>1</sup>

The Church claims the whole man in her worship, nothing is counted too small to be offered to God. We are directed when and how we shall kneel, or stand, or sit, and for the perfection of the Office every direction must be followed with exactness and becoming recollection. All slouchiness of attitude is to be avoided. Stand erect with the feet firmly together ; sit upright, the eyes never wandering ; and above all let not the attitude of kneeling degenerate into an undignified position of reclining.<sup>2</sup>

In order that the Office may be outwardly rendered with the proper dignity and reverence, it is, of course, necessary for each one to know what it is. The diligent Religious will always before the beginning of the Office look up the calendar, rubrics, etc., so as not

<sup>1</sup> Billuart, *Tractatus de Religione*, Dis. ii, Art. viii, sec. 7.

<sup>2</sup> See Clark, *Observances of Barnwell Priory*, pp. 81 and 87.

to be taken unawares should anything unusual be appointed for the day. Few things are more unedifying than to see a Religious in choir turning the pages hurriedly back and forth, trying to find a psalm or antiphon, for which he was not ready.

2. *Of the "Officium Mentis," or the Devotion of the Mind.* There must not only be the dedication of the body in order to secure the fulness of worship, but there must be the devotion of the intellect. This involves, first of all, a careful attention to what is being said. We cannot expect to go through the Office without occasional wandering thoughts, and all our spiritual masters agree that involuntary distractions are not sins. But voluntary distraction can and must be avoided under pain of sin, and the Religious is bound to guard against all things that experience shows may distract the attention. Perhaps the most fruitful source of inattention is the wandering of the eyes. "Especially during the Divine Office," says Blosius, "keep your eyes from wandering, neither lightly look about you either this way or that, unless necessity require, lest you chance to see something that may hinder you from attention and purity of heart."<sup>1</sup>

St. Charles Borromeo advised as a means of keeping the attention, that one should always *read* the Office, never attempting to say even the most familiar parts from memory, however thoroughly he may know them by heart. The authority of so great a Saint would be sufficient, even if almost universal experience did not prove this counsel to be wise.

<sup>1</sup> Blosius, *A Mirror for Monks* (Coleridge's translation), p. 74.



In order to secure the full application of the intellect, more is required than attention during the time the Office is being said. He who would gain most from the Office should know its meaning. In the present day of universal education there is no reason why every Religious should not have an intelligent knowledge of the Psalter, the meaning of the Psalms, and have ready in mind the correct interpretation of every verse. This knowledge can be secured by the ordinary use of one of the commentaries that may be found in any properly furnished monastic library. Unless one secures some such knowledge, his Office can scarcely fail to become at least in part a meaningless exercise. Such a study should be a part of the regular training of the novitiate.

3. *Of the "Officium Cordis," or the Devotion of the Heart.* It will avail little, either for God's glory or our own edification, if we are careful of the outward rendering, and watchful of the mental attention, unless the heart is in it. In giving directions to Sisters for the Divine Office, St. Augustine says : " In the psalms and hymns used with your prayers to God, let that be pondered in the heart which is uttered by the voice."<sup>1</sup> The affections must be aroused, and the Office as a whole, and in its every part, must be offered to God as an act of love and adoration, of penitence or praise, as the meaning may suggest. We are to throw ourselves into the spirit of the Psalmist ; pray when he prays, grieve when he grieves, love when he loves, praise when he praises. For the recitation of the Psalter is but the borrowing of the words that

<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *Epis.* ccxi, 7. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxiii, col. 960.

the Holy Spirit gave the Psalmist with which to express himself, that we may be able the better to offer like aspirations to God.<sup>1</sup>

This arousing of the affections has little, oftentimes nothing, to do with our feelings. It lies in the will. Set the will to work. Will to love ; will to grieve for sin ; will to praise or adore. The spirit may be heavy and reluctant, but if one wills it, if one desires it, this constant endeavour will, according to the teaching of St. Bernard, be accounted to him as though he had indeed reached the perfection of success.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV. *Of the Obligation of the Divine Office*

The form and extent of the Office for different communities are governed by their particular Rules and Constitutions. Some say the entire Breviary, comprehending Matins and the Canonical Hours of the Day Office. Others say the Day Office only, while numerous communities are bound only to the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin. St. Francis de Sales appointed for the members of the Order of the Visitation who were not choir nuns, that instead of Prime, Terce, Sext, and None, they should say twelve Paters and the same number of Aves with one Credo each morning ; seven Paters and Aves in lieu

<sup>1</sup> The Abbot Isaac says : " He will utter them with the deepest emotion of heart, not as if they were the composition of the psalmist, but rather as if they were his own utterances, and his very own prayer."—Cassian, *Conferences*, x, cap. xi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 838.

<sup>2</sup> St. Bernard, *Epis.*, ccliv. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. clxxxii, col. 460.

of Vespers and Compline ; and ten in place of Matins and Lauds.<sup>1</sup>

The Office itself, and all subsidiary devotions, such as the secret prayers before and after, are of obligation only so far as the Rule of the community makes them so. In the case of a priest who is a Religious, however, the regulations of his community, while they may add to, cannot in any way change or diminish the Office which he is bound to say under the canonical requirements of the Church, unless the community he enters has its own proper Office approved by the Church. Whatever Office may be said, substantially the same principles govern both the obligation of saying it, and the care with which it is rendered.

What has been said concerning the principle and dignity of the Divine Office makes it plain that every Religious is under weighty obligation to be faithful in its recitation. God's praise and honour are, of course, the first consideration. Sufficient has been said in Section II of this chapter to show this.

But since Religious occupy a vicarial office, they have a responsibility to their brethren in the world which they must be careful to discharge by faithfulness to their life of prayer. This obligation binds them in virtue both of *charity* and *justice*.

1. They owe it to the world as a matter of charity, and this for two reasons : (a) because of the needs of the world. They are appointed to intercede for all men, to pray for blessings both spiritual and temporal. Their relations to the world about

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, i.

them is that of a messenger sent to the headquarters of an army to secure supplies for the men who are in the field. If the messenger is unfaithful, the men suffer. So the Religious is appointed to bring by his urgent and continual intercessions, blessing and strength of every kind to those for whom he is appointed to intercede. It was the realization of this need of intercession that moved kings and nobles of the Middle Ages to found and endow Religious houses on their estates. They felt that amidst the perils of their rude times, they would not be able to make their way at all without the special and continuous intercession, which they secured for themselves and their people by making such foundations.

(b) Further, considering the spiritual weakness of men in general, there is grave need that certain ones devote their energies assiduously to strengthen every part of the Body of Christ. This is to be done not only by direct intercession ; that is, by petitioning for the particular needs of particular persons or groups of persons ; but by the general work of importing spiritual strength from God into the Church. If we, by faithfulness in our life of prayer, make advance in the Perfection towards which we are bound to tend, every other Christian shares our strength and progress, since it is impossible that one member of a body should be strengthened and all others not share that strength. As St. Paul declares : " If one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."<sup>1</sup> When one considers the weakness of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians xii. 26.



Christ's members and their longing for a state of closer union with Him, he can see how great a debt of charity he owes to them to do all he can to become a centre of spiritual power, radiating grace and healing to every part of the Mystical Body of Christ.

2. The debt is also one of justice. Many Religious communities are sustained wholly by the alms of the faithful, and there are few which do not in some measure depend for their livelihood upon gifts from God's people. These alms are not given out of personal regard, but solely on the ground of our labours. The instinct of the faithful has ever been to support Religious so that the *Opus Dei* might go on without the distraction that follows from anxiety over temporal needs. We differentiate here, of course, between the alms given to Religious for their own support and those contributed for the sustenance of external works conducted by them.

Since this is the thought that is either implicitly or explicitly in the mind of those who give alms to Religious, the latter by accepting them incur a debt which can be discharged only by faithfulness in praying for such benefactors in particular, and the needs of the Church in general.

Therefore both in virtue of charity and justice, every Religious will have to render a strict account at the Judgment of his life of prayer, the heart of which must always be the Divine Office.

Cardinal de Bérulle, the saintly founder of the Oratory in France, and the friend and fellow-worker of St. Vincent de Paul, summarizes in a compelling

fashion the obligation of the Religious to be faithful to the *Opus Dei* :

“ You fulfil this Office not for yourselves alone,” he says, “ but for every creature who is unworthy or unable to praise his God. Some are dumb, destitute alike of voice and soul, and they borrow your intelligence, your tongue to offer to their Creator an ascription of praise ; others are as it were in their childhood, under age, and they avail themselves of your primogeniture and seniority in the order of grace for the purpose by your instrumentality of fulfilling their bounden duty and paying to their sovereign Lord the homage they owe to Him ; others by their own fault have deprived themselves of the graces that might have been theirs, and being accursed of God are unable to sing His praises. Thus a twofold blessing rests on you ; you are doubly privileged, inasmuch as you praise God on behalf of others and on your own. With this intention, and this idea, betake yourself to the choir, as if empowered by all created beings to laud and magnify their common Lord, as if commissioned to perform their duty and do their part for them.

“ You praise God in the name of heaven and of earth, of creatures animate and inanimate, of Christians and unbelievers, of Catholics and heretics, of the elect and the reprobate, of hell itself, though it would fain silence your voice. You stand between heaven and hell ; hell is beneath your feet, and would to God that you took as much pains to praise God as the devils do to curse Him ! Would to God that you had as vivid a conviction of His mercy as hell has of

His justice! Heaven is opened above you ; would to God that you were informed by a faith as lively and steadfast as the vision of His grandeur enjoyed by its denizens is clear and blissful ! Would to God that your elevation of soul, your pious transports equalled in degree the repose, the glory, the happiness of the redeemed in the possession of their Lord !”<sup>1</sup>

V. *Of Questions concerning the Divine Office*

Many practical questions constantly arise regarding the Divine Office, which we shall seek to answer briefly, following the opinions of the best authorities.

1. The order of the hours should not be changed without cause. It is allowable, however, to do so in order to say an Office with a companion ; or when one happens to come into choir as a certain Office is beginning, when he has not yet said the Office preceding it.

2. It suffices for the formal integrity of an Office to say it outwardly, even if there be notable lack of attention. The inattention may be a sin, but it is not required that the Office be repeated.

3. Superiors ordinarily have the right to grant dispensation from Office for good and sufficient reasons.

4. Certain circumstances may relieve one from the obligation of the Office, such as serious illness or an imperative call of charity or necessity.

5. One who is dispensed, but who can recite a part of the Office without inconvenience, is required to do so. But if such an one doubts whether he can do this,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Giraud, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, p. 474.

because of sickness or other weakness, the doubt relieves him of obligation to say any portion whatever.

6. One who has by him only a Breviary different from his own is bound to use it. Should one not have the Proper of a Saint whose feast is being kept, he is held to use the Common.

7. The Office of the day must be said between midnight and midnight. Save for good reason, Matins and Lauds should not be postponed until after, nor Vespers and Compline said before noon. Matins and Lauds may be said by anticipation the evening before, after Vespers and Compline. This custom goes back as far as St. Thomas Aquinas, who rules to this effect,<sup>1</sup> on the ground that the day of the ecclesiastical Office begins with Vespers. The modern Roman rule permits them to be said at any time on the previous day after the sun has completed half his course between midday and setting, so that if the sun sets at four o'clock, Matins for the following day may be said as early as two in the afternoon.<sup>2</sup>

8. When one has reason to think there will be serious interruption of his ordinary daily routine, he may say all his Offices by anticipation. This is much to be preferred to postponing them to the end of the day. The former is discreet forethought, while the latter may easily be sloth.

9. Religious who have missed parts of the Office on account of certain duties pertaining to the chapel, such as ringing the bell, lighting candles, preparing

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Questiones Quodl.*, v, Art. 28.

<sup>2</sup> Doyle, *Principles of Religious Life*, p. 101.



incense, arranging books or music, etc., are not required to make up the parts omitted. This rule is based on the fact that the choir is regarded as one mystical body, and is supposed to make up any deficiency of any individual member of it who is engaged at the moment in some employment that makes a contribution to the proper rendering of the Office, its ritual, etc.<sup>1</sup>

10. Those who, being in choir, have lost even a considerable part of the Office from an obstinate fit of coughing, or like infirmity, are not required to make it up.

11. If one, on account of absent-mindedness, cannot recall if he has said a certain portion of an Office, he is not required to make it up. Scrupulous persons should be forbidden to do so.

12. If one has in good faith said the wrong Office, he need not say that which should have been used. If one discovers his mistake when far along in the wrong Office, it suffices for the integrity of his obligation to change to the proper Office at the point where the mistake was discovered. He is bound, however, to report such a delinquency to his Superior or in the Chapter of Faults, if this be the custom of his community.

13. An Office should not be interrupted for a notable length of time, without good cause. When this is unavoidable, however, it is well to begin again the nocturn or the psalm in which the interruption fell. It is in general held that for reasonable cause the Nocturns of Matins may be separated from each

<sup>1</sup> Billuart, *Tractatus de Religione*, Dis. ii, Art. viii, sec. 7.

other for any length of time, provided they be said within the twenty-four hours of the liturgical day.<sup>1</sup>

14. One is not required to conform to the rubrical directions concerning posture in Office, when he is not saying it with the choir ; nor is it necessary when reciting the Office privately to articulate so that one can hear his own voice. It is possible to articulate without the words being audible.

15. It has been held for many centuries that hearing the Office said does not satisfy the obligation, unless one has taken his regular part in it. Among the ancient Egyptian monasteries, however, the Psalms were generally said by one person while the rest of the choir, sitting, listened in reverent silence, " following the voice of the singer with the utmost attention of heart."<sup>2</sup> St. Basil says that in his time, however, " divided into two parts, they sing antiphonally with one another," and he resists a charge that this was an innovation, declaring that " the customs which here obtain, are agreeable to those of all the Churches of God . . . in a word all those among whom vigils, prayers, and common psalmody have been held in honour."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Alphonsus, *Theol. Moral.* Lib. v, No. 166. (Paris, 1855.)

<sup>2</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, Lib. ii, cap. xii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 102 *seq.*

<sup>3</sup> St. Basil, *Epis.* ccvii, 3. (This Epistle was written in 375.)

## CHAPTER XIV

### MONASTIC OBSERVANCES

#### I. *Of Religious Silence*

SILENCE has been one of the chief exercises of the Religious Life in all ages. St. Basil and Cassian bear witness to the way in which it was regarded in their day ; and the Rule of St. Benedict is very definite in its directions for its observance.<sup>1</sup> The Dominican Order shows its reverence for it by the repeated use in its Constitutions of the expression *sanctissima silentii lex*—"the most sacred law of silence" ; and testifies to the dignity of the practice by calling it a "ceremony"—*silentium est pulchra caeremonia*.<sup>2</sup> Each community arranges the details of silence according to its own custom, but the general principles laid down by St. Benedict are accepted practically by all.

The general rule in the monastery is that of silence. Exceptions are made regarding certain places and times. As a general custom the silence is broken only

<sup>1</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Constitutiones Fratrum S. Ord. Praed.* (Paris, 1886), p. 115. It must be remembered that the Latin word *caeremonia*, means much more than our English equivalent. It implies not a mere formality, but a *rite* that is essentially sacred and divine.

in certain rooms in the monastery appointed for such conversation as may be allowed by the Rule or the permission of Superiors, and certain hours of silence are set which are binding upon all.

The directions concerning silence set forth in the community Rule should be obeyed with great care and explicitness. Silence should not be broken in forbidden times and places to meet the mere convenience of circumstances. It should be observed with great strictness and not violated except for important reasons, and then not without the permission of the Superior when it may be had. What has been said in another chapter concerning permissions applies here. If a call of real necessity or charity requires, one would not hesitate to speak, but it is better to suffer much inconvenience than to break one's Rule and contribute to that laxity which is so prone to creep in if vigilant guard be not maintained. It must also be remembered that one who violates the Rule of silence can seldom do so without involving another in his fault.

"Let no one," says an ancient English Rule of Augustinian Canons, "think himself a well-ordered Religious, or godfearing Canon, if he get into a habit of breaking silence, without urgent reason, at prohibited times and in prohibited places; for this want of control of the tongue is an evident sign of a dissolute mind and of a neglected conscience. . . . Therefore let Canons Regular regard silence as a precious treasure, since through it a remedy against so many dangers is supplied to them."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Clark, *The Observances of Barnwell Priory*, p. 141.



The chief period of silence is that which extends from Compline until after Prime or Mass on the following morning. Whatever elasticity may be permitted regarding the other silences, the "Great Silence" or "Solemn Silence," as it is usually called, is kept with great strictness. St. Benedict says: "Monks should keep silence at all times, but especially during the hours of the night,"<sup>1</sup> and he directs that when Compline is finished, "let none be allowed to speak to any one, and if anyone should be found to evade this rule of silence, let him be subjected to severe punishment." The only exceptions he allows are in the case of guests arriving after this hour, or of some emergency arising which would require the Superior to give direction or permission to speak. On these occasions, however, he directs that such necessary conversations be conducted "with the greatest gravity and moderation" (*cum summa gravitate et moderatione honestissime fiat*), so that one may bear witness by his manner to the unusual character of the indulgence, and prevent the talk from becoming light or general.<sup>2</sup> An old Benedictine custom was to begin the Great Silence with the words, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips."<sup>3</sup>

We have abundant Scripture evidence concerning the value and necessity of silence. The Psalmist prayed that God would keep the door of his lips, and the Wise Man says, "In the multitude of words there

<sup>1</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Doyle, *The Teaching of St. Benedict*, p. 82.

<sup>3</sup> Psalms cxli. 3.

wanteth not sin.”<sup>1</sup> St. James tells us that “the tongue is a little member,” but “a world of iniquity,” and again, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”<sup>2</sup>

One who speaks much can never cultivate the spirit of prayer which is the chief work of the Religious. “Continual talk,” says Scaramelli, “fills the mind with countless empty phantasms, dissipates the spirit, spoils recollection, indisposes for prayer, takes away the opportunity for practising virtue, and occasions a multitude of sins. In a word, it robs us little by little of every spiritual gift, and makes us wholly unable to recover our loss.”<sup>3</sup>

Thomas à Kempis has many precious counsels concerning silence : “It is easier not to speak at all than not to exceed in speech” ; “No man doth safely speak, but he that is glad to hold his peace.”<sup>4</sup>

The cell has ever been regarded as a place for prayer, study, and quiet labour, and is therefore one of the principal parts of the house in which silence is enjoined. Ordinarily no one is allowed to enter another’s cell without permission, and general conversation there should be avoided unless special leave be given for it. An edifying custom prevails in some communities of the occupant of the cell, when anyone knocks, responding, not with an informal invitation to enter, as men in the world might give, but with

<sup>1</sup> Proverbs x. 19.

<sup>2</sup> St. James iii. 5, 6 ; and i. 26.

<sup>3</sup> Scaramelli, *Directorium Asceticum*, Vol. ii, p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> à Kempis, *De Imit.*, i, 20.

the words, "*In Nomine Dei*"<sup>1</sup>—"In the Name of God." Entering the sacred precincts of the cell under such an invocation would surely prevent the intercourse from degenerating into merely entertaining conversation conducted in forgetfulness of the character of the place.

## II. *Of Religious Recreation*

Monastic recreation in the modern sense is not mentioned in the primitive rules. Neither St. Basil nor St. Benedict makes any provision for it, although in the course of time the necessity of it came to be seen, and it is appointed in the Constitutions of nearly all Religious houses.

It is an error, however, to regard the recreation of a monastic house as a relaxation in the sense in which this word is generally used concerning Religious observance. So far from this being the case, recreation is itself a formal observance, which is conducted under obedience as much as are the silences or any other practice. All are to be present except those who may be excused by the proper authority, or whose assigned work may make it impossible for them to attend. No one but the Superior is to presume to begin the conversation at recreation.

Recreation is one of the closest tests of the Religious. One's conduct at this time is an index of the spiritual influence of the Rule, and few exercises declare more accurately what the work of prayer and silence is worth to the soul.

Says one authority, "Let the brethren know that

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, xxiii.

this interruption of prayer and labour is equally consecrated to God so that they may rival one another in the practice of humility and charity, showing mutual love with genuine cordiality such as may render them truly modest, self-forgotten, kind, gentle, patient, simple, cheerful, ready to help each other, and seeking to become all things to all men."<sup>1</sup>

The recreation hour affords numberless opportunities for the exercise of the virtues. In fact, without it the Religious would be cut off from many of the most advantageous occasions of merit. It is easier not to speak at all than not to speak amiss. There is small opportunity during times of silence to learn how to govern the tongue ; but when one, surrounded by his brethren, is permitted to speak freely, he has the amplest occasion to practise this most important virtue.

Exercises of humility will find place 'pre-eminently in recreation, and he who is watching for these opportunities and is resolute to seize them, will never come to the end of the hour of recreation without being more like his humble Lord than he was at the beginning. The good Religious will prefer others to himself ; he will humbly wait until they have expressed their opinion before venturing his own ; he will refrain from disputation, from the effort, unless undoubtedly of necessity, to correct others, or show them to be wrong ; in matters indifferent he will be sweetly content to be regarded as in the wrong himself ; and the infirmities of his brethren he will

<sup>1</sup> Benedictine Constitutions, quoted in *A Day in the Cloister*, by Dom Bede Camm, p. 165. (St. Louis, 1900.)



bear with patience and love. A moment's reflection will show how manifold are such occasions during recreation, and how rich a harvest of merit awaits the good Religious daily as he meets with his brethren, if he will but stretch forth his hand to gather it.

Lest conversation become desultory and unedifying it is advisable that Superiors, or those who may preside, come prepared to direct the course of recreation, if necessary, by introducing subjects the consideration of which will tend to the profit of the community. It is often customary for the Superior to introduce reading into the recreation hour, especially letters from absent members, giving accounts of community activities, sending greetings to the brethren, etc., or extracts from such books as may prove edifying.

It is not necessary that subjects [which are introduced at recreation be always of a religious or spiritual character. Care must be taken that subjects be not brought in that are beyond the understanding of any present. The recreation must be strictly a community exercise into which all may enter, at least in the way of receiving instruction intelligently.

### III. *Of the Refectory*

From the earliest days the refectory has been regarded as one of the places in the monastery that are to be specially guarded by Rule. It is not merely a place where the Religious take their food. The refectory has ever been considered quite as much a place for prayer as for bodily refreshment, and prayer has ever been the more regarded because in

the taking of food and drink man so easily runs into the sin of excess.

The very appearance of the refectory, its structure and its furnishings, are a call to prayer. In a prominent place on the walls is a crucifix to which all bow on entering or departing according to the ancient custom,<sup>1</sup> and in a convenient place stands the pulpit, from which is dispensed spiritual refection while the brethren receive that which is necessary for the health and strength of the body. The refectory is one of the places within the monastery that is devoted especially to silence. St. Jerome mentions this as a general monastic rule of his time.<sup>2</sup> Nor is this silence ordained only for the conservation of the general quiet of the monastery, but like the solemn silence of the night, it has a special spiritual significance. *Summum silentium* is the expression used by St. Benedict in his Rule describing the silence that should obtain in the refectory, and it is insisted upon in order that the brethren may without distraction engage their minds with heavenly things, lest their thoughts and attention be given to mere bodily indulgence.

Carrying out this aim, one of the most important points of monastic routine has always been the reading in the refectory during meals. Cassian informs us that this custom originated among the monks of Cappadocia.<sup>3</sup> It seems to have been well established

<sup>1</sup> Clark, *Observances of Barnwell Priory*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> St. Jerome, *Epis.* xxii, *ad Eustochium*. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxii, col. 420.

<sup>3</sup> Cassian, *Institutes*, iv, 17. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 175.

in the time of St. Basil (A.D. 370). He mentions it in his Shorter Rules,<sup>1</sup> and practically all of the later monastic Rules provide for it.

St. Augustine mentions it in the Epistle upon which the Augustinian Rule is based. He exhorts the Sisters to whom the Epistle is addressed: "Let not your mouth only receive food, but let your ears hunger after the word of God."<sup>2</sup> St. Caesarius of Arles, who flourished about a century after St. Augustine's time (A.D. 542), had evidently well digested the latter's monastic doctrine, for he mentions these refectory exercises, quoting St. Augustine's exhortation, and himself adding, "When the reading has ceased, let not holy meditation of the heart cease."<sup>3</sup>

St. Benedict had so high a regard for this exercise that he provided for it in much detail. The post of reader was not to be taken, like other duties, in rotation, but only those were allowed to read who could "edify the hearers."<sup>4</sup> The office was regarded as one of great dignity, and lest the exercise of it should become a temptation to vainglory, the reader began his turn always on Sunday, after making his communion. Coming into the midst of the chapel, he asked the prayers of the brethren that he might perform his office faithfully and humbly. He then

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Brevius Tractatae*, 180.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, *Epis.* ccxi, cap. viii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xxxiii, col. 961.

<sup>3</sup> See St. Caesarius of Arles, *Regula ad Virgines*, cap. xvi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxvii, col. 1109; also *Regula ad Monachos*, cap. ix. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxvii, col. 1099.

<sup>4</sup> St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 38.

thrice repeated the words : " O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise," whereupon the Superior offered a prayer that he might be protected from the spirit of pride. Among some of the English Augustinians he received a second blessing in the refectory immediately before beginning the reading.<sup>1</sup>

During the reading " profoundest silence " (*summum silentium*) is commanded to be observed. The Superior, however, may break the silence to explain a difficult passage, or to correct mistakes made by the reader. The immediate correction of such mistakes is an old custom.<sup>2</sup> The Religious are forbidden to gaze about them, but are to take their food with eyes modestly cast down, not looking around more than may be necessary to minister to the wants of those who may be seated near them.

Conversation at dinner, after a brief Scripture reading, is allowed in many excellent communities on special occasions, greater feasts, etc. No one, however, at such times, should presume to begin the conversation except the Superior.

Wants, so far as possible, are to be made known by signs. It is hardly necessary to add that the true Religious will not exercise choice regarding his food. He will help himself as it comes, choosing neither the best nor the worst on the dish, for even to give himself the worst may be an act of self-will. The wisest

<sup>1</sup> Clark, *Observances of Barnwell Priory*, p. liv.

<sup>2</sup> See St. Benedict, *Regula*, cap. 38; and Clark, *Observances of Barnwell Priory*, p. 159. Since 1251 the Dominican Constitutions have required a "corrector" in every Convent. See *Const. Frat. S. Ord. Praed.*, p. 94.



Religious legislators have always held that no fasting, or other acts of self-denial, of such a nature as to attract notice, are to be permitted without the consent of the Superior.<sup>1</sup> St. Basil returns again and again to this subject in his Rules. He allows no one to practise any mortification according to his own judgment. "Abstinence," he says, "is not placed only in the absence of what belongeth to food, but in the entire separation from one's own will."<sup>2</sup> The Religious is "to fast with the brethren and to eat together with them,"<sup>3</sup> unless he has permission to the contrary. He who seeks "to fast of his own will . . . while he so doeth is a stranger to piety . . . If anyone considereth that he hath need of anything more, whether by fasting or vigils, or in anything else whatsoever, let him disclose the matter to those entrusted with the common charge of this very thing. . . . Let him keep to the thing approved by them."<sup>4</sup> Slight practices of mortification that would not draw attention, however, are to be allowed in the refectory, indeed recommended.

The food set before the Religious should be plain, plentiful and substantial. Mere delicacies should rarely be placed on the table, although on great feasts some relaxation may be permitted without hurt. Anciently, three dishes were allowed at the principal meal of the day, and this rule still obtains in many of the best regulated monastic houses. Superiors

<sup>1</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, iii.

<sup>2</sup> St. Basil, *Reg. Brev. Tract.*, 128.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 138. Those who wish to go further into this subject will find many other strong expressions in St. Basil's Rules.

should be watchful of the particular needs of their subjects, taking care that those who engage in heavy manual labour, and those in delicate health, be served with food of such kind and quantity as suits their wants; at the same time being cautious lest physical need be made the occasion of an undue or even sinful indulgence.

The Constitutions or Customals of various communities regulate the general question of food, its quality, quantity, frequency of meals, etc. It should always be a point of definite regulation under the proper authorities, as it is a matter of grave importance in the life of the monastery. It should never be left to the judgment of subordinates. Anciently, the whole question of the food of Religious was regarded as of such importance as to be made the subject of repeated legislation by the Councils of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

Tardiness at meals has always been regarded as a serious fault, and the older Rules deal particularly with it. Those who come after grace has been said should not take their seats until they have presented themselves before the Superior or the senior at table, and received permission to do so. Frequent tardiness would be a matter for discipline. The Benedictine Rule forbids frequent offenders being admitted to the common table.

On the conclusion of the thanksgiving after meals it is an ancient custom for the community to go in procession directly from the table to the chapel for brief devotions, the Miserere, or other psalms, being

<sup>1</sup>*e.g.*, the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle in A.D. 816, and that of Cloveshoo, in England, in A.D. 747.

said or sung as they proceed. The reader and the servers remain in the refectory, however, for their meal at a second table.

#### IV. *Of the Chapter of Faults*

The Chapter of Faults is a meeting of all the professed members of the community at which public acknowledgment is made of all external breaches of the Rule and Constitutions, of the regulations of the monastery, or of the known will of the Superior. The time and method of conducting the Chapter of Faults is regulated by each community for its own members. In some the Chapter is held daily; in others, once a week. The older communities generally held it daily. The Chapter of Faults is an ancient observance. St. Basil refers to it,<sup>1</sup> and in some form all monastic orders have required it.

In Chapter, neither sins as such, nor interior faults, should be mentioned, but only those external breaches that are contrary to formal Religious obligation. One would not, for example, mention a violation of the spirit of poverty, or of any other virtue to which he is bound. A fault may have to be acknowledged that has also the character of sin against God, but it is not mentioned because it is a sin, but because it is contrary to the Rule or the Superior's directions.

The acknowledgment in Chapter is not to be regarded as a confession to God, but as an account rendered by the Religious to the community, of failures to fulfil his part of the covenant which he made with the community at profession. This

<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Regulae Fusius Tractatae*, 26.

account should be rendered fully and conscientiously, and to do this a Religious has to keep some record, mental or otherwise, of the delinquencies he has detected in himself. In order that his acknowledgment be full it is always safer to keep some written record. This is the more needful if the Chapter is held at intervals of many days.

A part of the remote preparation for the Chapter of Faults is to keep the Rule and Constitution, the Custumal, the local house regulations, etc., fresh in one's mind. They should frequently be reviewed in private, even if they are publicly read to the Religious. Experience shows that the observance of minor directions and obediences can easily be neglected, almost unconsciously, unless one is constantly examining himself explicitly by the Rule, point by point.

In some of the older communities, the Religious not only accused himself, but certain brethren who observed in him breaches of discipline were required to accuse him of them. This practice is in accord with the disciplinary system that was universal some centuries ago, but is hardly suited to our times, where espionage of every kind is wisely deprecated as harmful to all concerned.<sup>1</sup> The Superior, however, is always free to remind his subjects of faults that they have overlooked, and, in many cases, especially if the fault be serious or habitual, it would be his bounden duty to do so.

Acknowledgments should be made with perfect

<sup>1</sup> Doyle says that it would not be tolerated among the Benedictines at the present day. See *The Teaching of St. Benedict*, p. 246.



frankness, and in so plain a manner that all present can hear and understand the nature of the breach. Any attempt at excuse or self-justification would not be tolerated in a well-ordered community.

Upon the confession of faults, the Superior, or the one presiding in his place, is to give rebuke or admonition as may in his judgment be advisable, and is to assign a penance to the delinquent suited to the gravity of his offences. No penance should be assigned that would in any way expose a member of the community to the notice and comment of externs.

Secrecy regarding the Chapter of Faults is always to be carefully observed. Nothing mentioned in Chapter should be referred to outside save in the exercise of necessary discipline. The "Customs" of the monastery of St. Victor at Paris says: "Above all the greatest precautions should be taken that no one speak to another, or make signs outside Chapter about faults or secrets that have been dealt with in Chapter."<sup>1</sup> The *Observances of Barnwell Priory* contain nothing concerning the discipline in the Chapter of Faults save general directions, "lest," they say, "a sight of this book should make known to strangers the secrets of the Chapter, which God forbid."<sup>2</sup>

Novices should not be admitted to the community Chapter of Faults.<sup>3</sup> They may have their own, under the direction of the Master of Novices.<sup>4</sup> The old

<sup>1</sup> *Customs of St. Victor*, quoted by Clark in *The Observances of Barnwell Priory*, p. lxxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> Willis Clark, *The Observances of Barnwell Priory*, p. 143. See also St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, xxiii.

<sup>3</sup> Willis Clark, *The Observances of Barnwell Priory*, p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> St. Francis de Sales, *Visitation Constitutions*, xxiii.

Benedictine custom was for novices and lay-brothers to confess their faults, receive their penances, and then retire from Chapter before the professed Choir monks made their acknowledgments.<sup>1</sup>

The fruit of the Chapter of Faults is to be practical amendment. He who finds himself violating points of his Rule, or his Superior's directions, if he be a true Religious will earnestly seek to amend in these particulars. He who comes to Chapter habitually acknowledging the same serious faults without any sign of amendment cannot be acquitted of grave carelessness in regard to his Religious obligations.

<sup>1</sup> Doyle, *The Teaching of St. Benedict*, p. 246.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

#### I. *Of Differentiations in the Religious State*

THE Religious State is differentiated into the *Contemplative*, the *Active*, and the *Mixed Life* ; and all forms of Religion, as recognized at the present time, fall under one or another of these divisions.

In the early Church the aim of almost all Monasticism was what we should now call contemplative. "Anciently," says Father Baker, "souls embracing a Religious Life were moved thereto merely out of the spirit of penance . . . their principal care being to attend unto God, and to aspire unto perfect union in spirit with Him."<sup>1</sup> Cassian, in reporting the first Conference of the Abbot Nestoros,<sup>2</sup> discusses what corresponds quite definitely to the Life we to-day should describe as the Mixed and the Contemplative. But it all, according to Nestoros, "tends to the contemplation of the secrets of the invisible mysteries." He divides the Religious Life into "the practical, which is brought about by an improvement of morals

<sup>1</sup> Augustine Baker, *Sancta Sophia*, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Cassian, *Conferences*, xiv, cc. i-iii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 953 *seq.*

and purification from faults," and "the theoretical, which consists in the contemplation of things divine and the knowledge of most sacred thoughts." The "practical," he explains as depending on a double system; "for its first method is to know the nature of all faults and the manner of their cure; its second, to discover the order of the virtues and form our mind by their perfection so that it may be obedient to them." This "practical" life was distributed amongst many occupations and interests, some devoting themselves to eradicating sins and implanting virtues by the exercise of hospitality, others by caring for the sick, some by teaching, or attendance on the poor, while others again devoted their time to intercessory prayer. But all this activity, of whatever kind, was a means to an end, and according to the Abbot Nestoros, from this practical knowledge "we must proceed to the spiritual," i.e., "to the contemplation of the secrets of the invisible mysteries."<sup>1</sup>

In the fifth century, Religious were divided into *cenobites*, *anchorites*, and *hermits*. St. Jerome, in his famous letter to St. Eustochius, gives a detailed account of these divisions as they were maintained in Egypt in the best period of primitive monasticism; and Cassian's *Institutes* and *Conferences* afford a narrative of fascinating interest, of the life, manners, and teaching of the Religious of his day.

The cenobites were those who lived in community.

<sup>1</sup> So the Abbot Abraham also teaches: "A monk's whole attention should thus be fixed on one point, and the rise and circle of all his thoughts be vigorously restricted to it, viz., to the recollection of God."—Cassian, *Conferences*, xxiv, cap. vi. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 1294-5.



The anchorites were those who, having had the cenobitic training, retired into the solitary life ; while those who had always professed the eremitical life were known as hermits. A century earlier, however, in St. Basil's time, the order seems to have been rather reversed, and instead of sending monks from the community life into that of the solitary, it was one of the great achievements of St. Basil to draw the solitaries from their isolation, and organize them into communities. He regarded the cenobitical life as in every way superior to that of any kind of solitary.<sup>1</sup>

At the present day, ordinarily the solitary life is not recognized ; and the Religious State is lived only in some kind of community. This refers to the actual ordinary practice of our time. However, " it might be asked," says Gautrelet, " if hermits or solitaries were formerly and are now really Religious. We reply that if they make the three vows of Religion and consecrate themselves to God for life, under the guidance of a confessor or director, nothing forbids us to regard them as really Religious. It is certain that such was the opinion of the holy Fathers in regard to the anchorites of their time. There is even less doubt in the case of those who, before embracing the eremitical life, made their solemn profession before the Bishop, as history relates of many monks and holy virgins."<sup>2</sup>

The three divisions of Religion, the Active, the Contemplative, and the Mixed, have, each in its own

<sup>1</sup> See Morison, *St. Basil and His Rule*, ch. vi, for an account of this work of St. Basil and the reasons for it. St. Basil's own argument may be read in *Reg. Fus.*, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 134.

sphere, their further differences. The monastic Orders, strictly so-called, are contemplative ; but some maintain the strictest enclosure, like the Carthusians ; while others, like the Benedictines, perform a multitude of ministries in the world.

Also among those who live the Mixed Life, there are many differences. The greatest differentiation, perhaps, in this class is that which constitutes certain of them as Mendicants. In order to maintain this character, Religious must be occupied in ministries to their neighbour, and must also be incapable of possessing any properties either individually or in common. They minister to the external needs of the Church, and live on the alms of the faithful. The properties they administer, and on which they live, according to the letter of their constitutions, are not theirs, although in most countries at present the refusal of the civil law to recognize the binding force of religious constitutions, compels them to maintain an actual legal possession. Morally, however, and according to the religious Rule by which they are bound, they are incapable of such holdings. Some Mendicants allow the possession in common of movable goods.<sup>1</sup>

## II. *Of Varieties of Religion as Ordained by the Holy Spirit*

“ There are differences of administration, but the same Spirit.” This apostolic teaching declares the principle that underlies the varieties of Religious Life as lived in the Church. In the kingdom of God there are many divinely appointed activities. There is a

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 204.

division of labour, one soul being called to this work, another to that. So also is it with the various corporate agencies that God sets in the Kingdom. As the individual has his vocation, so has the community. Each has its own work set for it in the sphere appointed by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore it must be understood that the varieties of Religious communities found in the Church are not the result of man's caprice. They are of divine ordinance according to the principle laid down repeatedly in Holy Scripture ; as St. Paul teaches : " He gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers " ; and all these labour towards the same end,—that is to say, " for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, just as we have seen in a former chapter that the Religious Life itself is not of human, or even of ecclesiastical, but of divine, institution, so it is with the varieties of Religious Life as they are found in the Church. The principle underlying their existence and their nature is one the Holy Spirit Himself ordains.

### III. *Of the Essence Common to the Various Forms of Religion*

Whatever varieties of Religious Life there may be in the Church, the differences lie in things which are accidental only. In their essence and substance all forms of Religious Life are the same. This substance

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians iv. 11-12.

consists in two things : (1) in seeking the perfection of charity towards God and towards one's neighbour ; and (2) in effecting the permanence of this aim by means of perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and the making a donation of oneself to a Religious community which stands as God's representative to see that the obligation is fulfilled.

The end of all forms of Religion is therefore the same, and the diversities exist only in respect to the means and observances employed to attain the end.

The proximate aim is the perfect fulfilment of the precepts. The counsels are ordained in order to secure the keeping of the precepts, and the vows are ordained in order that the counsels may be kept. All this has for its final purpose the glory of God in the life of perfect union with Him by means of love.

The above statements represent, therefore, that which is common to every form of Religious Life. Indeed, unless these aims and principles appear in the life and work of a community, it cannot be said to embrace the Religious Life in any true sense. All communities are bound to seek the glory of God by means of the perfection of their members. All are bound to seek this end by labouring for and tending towards perfection. All live under the perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, the exact mode of their life being determined by a Rule according to which all their members promise to shape their lives.

These are the common grounds upon which all Religious Communities exist, nor can they depart



from any one of these without forfeiting their essential nature as Religious.

#### IV. *Of the Contemplative Life*

By contemplation is meant that interior consideration of God and of the knowledge of God that bears fruit in the will and raises the mind to God in such a way as to unite the soul to Him.

The Contemplative Life is that which is devoted essentially to prayer and the contemplation of divine truth. Everything else that may enter into such a life is contributory to this end. Contemplative Religious may engage in certain occupations within their own walls by which they may contribute to their livelihood, they may take part in the ordinary care of the monastery and its precincts, or may even be devoted to ministries outside their enclosure ; but all this work is incidental, and is done only in order to secure the conditions best suited to foster their continual work of prayer.

The actual work of prayer is accomplished according to the provisions made for itself by each community. In contemplative communities more attention is paid to the rendering of the Divine Office, longer hours are afforded for meditation, and often periods for continuous intercession, prayer, and adoration are set, the members in some communities alternating by an arrangement that secures an unbroken work of prayer during the entire twenty-four hours of the day.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One of the earliest known instances of such community prayer is that in the Convent presided over by St. Macrina, St. Basil's sister.

The amount of such work depends largely on the number and general strength of the community, for it is recognized that steady attentive prayer is difficult, both physically and mentally, and a wise Superior will apportion it accordingly. Naturally, where it is possible, this work of prayer is done in the Presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and often it assumes the definite form of perpetual adoration of the Incarnate God present on our altars under the sacramental forms.

It is an instinct natural to man to withdraw from the distractions necessarily incident to ordinary human intercourse, when he wishes to pray. Our Lord withdrew into a mountain for His all-night vigils, and in Gethsemane He retired apart from His disciples to pray. Following this instinct, those who lead such a life of prayer ordinarily do not leave the monastic enclosure. Hence it is often spoken of as the "Enclosed" or "Cloistered" Life. The Christian idea of the Cloistered Religious goes back to St. Anna, the prophetess. St. Luke tells us that "She was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers, night and day."<sup>1</sup>

In considering the Contemplative Life we must dismiss the notion, not uncommon in the world, that it necessarily involves the extraordinary experiences which we read of in the lives of certain Saints, and

St. Gregory Nyssa, in his Life of her, says there was no time by day or night when the work of prayer and the chanting of the Psalter stopped. See St. Gregory Nyssa, *De Vita S. Macrinae*. Migne, P. G., Tom. xlv, col. 969.

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke ii. 37.

which are treated by ascetical writers under the general title of "Contemplation," and divided by them into "Ordinary" and "Extraordinary Contemplation."

The so-called Contemplative Life, so far as its *essence* is concerned, is no more austere than any other form of the Religious Life. Nor is there *essentially* any mystery or mysticism about it save the same profound mystery into which every child of God enters when he prays. According to the nature and fitness of things, however, the Contemplative Life lends itself to practices of greater austerity than any other form of Religion ; and although, as we have said above, it is no part of its *essence*, yet the history of the Religious State in the Church shows that Contemplative communities have usually been the most austere.

So far as concerns the notion that the Contemplative Life of necessity involves for all who profess it extraordinary spiritual experiences, ecstasies, visions, or even what is known as "the prayer of quiet," it will suffice to remark that if these pertained essentially to its ordinary character, the act of voluntarily entering a community professing it could with difficulty be cleared of the charge of presumption. As a matter of fact, many of the greatest contemplatives were members of communities engaged in external activities. St. John of the Cross, the profoundest of contemplatives, was of the Carmelite Order, professing the Mixed Life. Few members of strictly Contemplative Orders have ever reached the exalted heights of St. Francis, the founder of the most active of mendicant

Orders; and these gifts of contemplation he shared to a pre-eminent degree with his companions, Brother Leo and the Blessed Giles. And St. Catherine of Siena was of the Third Order of St. Dominic, living all her life in her father's house, with none of the privileges of convent rule or enclosure.

Even in the strictest enclosed communities, definitely professing the Contemplative Life, it has always been rare to find souls to whom God has shown favours of this character. So far from teaching their subjects and disciples to expect such experiences, the unanimous counsel of spiritual directors is that such supposed favours or manifestations are to be suspected, and serious consideration of them discouraged unless they have been tested by men of the most approved learning and sanctity.

If God vouchsafes to give such graces to a Religious, the community in which he lives would count it a profound blessing, but for a community or any member of it to look definitely for such extraordinary divine dealings, would open the door to the deceptive wiles of Satan.

The attainment to these higher operations of prayer pertains essentially to no one external form of Religious Life. It is a matter that lies between the individual soul and God, and the grace of contemplation is a special and extraordinary gift from Him that is quite independent of the form of one's Religious profession, or indeed of any Religious profession whatever. It depends, first, upon the soul's correspondence with the graces received in affective prayer, the prayer that eliminates self and employs its



energies only in acts and affections of the will. After this the soul awaits God's good pleasure, and it is of His will, moving according to His wisdom, not according to any claim or merit of ours, "whether it will ever be advanced by Him to the most perfect form of prayer which is compatible with our state here below,—that is to say, to the prayer of contemplation."<sup>1</sup>

"God giveth it where He will," says Walter Hilton, "to learned and unlearned, to men and to women, to them that are in government, and to the solitary also. But it is special and not common."<sup>2</sup>

So far from expecting such divine favours, "No one," says Doyle, "ought to aspire to contemplation, except remotely, by removing all obstacles, and holding himself in readiness to follow the will of God. With this he must content himself, unless he perceives that he has a special divine vocation to exercise himself in prayer, the signs of which vocation he must humbly submit to the judgment of competent authorities. . . . Indeed, we may say that extraordinary contemplative prayer ought not, in a certain sense, to be either desired or asked for ; because it is one of God's gratuitously given graces, which, as we know, do not of themselves sanctify us ; moreover, eminent sanctity may be attained without their aid ; nay, these graces sometimes prove a snare and a source of ruin instead of a help and a means of perfection."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Doyle, *Principles of Religious Life*, p. 212.

<sup>2</sup> Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Doyle, *Principles of Religious Life*, p. 229.

V. *Of the "Four Steps of the Cloister Stair"*

It is evident from what we have learned above that the so-called Contemplative Life must embrace something besides that unusual and extraordinary form of prayer technically known as Contemplation. Guigo the Carthusian here comes to our aid and teaches us that the Contemplative Life embraces four particular elements which he calls the *Scala Claustralium*, the four steps of the Cloister Stair. These are : *Reading, Meditation, Prayer, and Contemplation*. The last-named, being the highest and most perfect element belonging to this variety of the Religious Life, gives it its name ; but, nevertheless, the Contemplative Life embraces them all, and he who faithfully pursues any one of them, definitely purposing it to be a means of more perfect union with God in prayer, offering it to Him as a devout oblation of the heart, is in the way of the *Vita Contemplativa*. We cannot say that one is not in the road because he has but begun the first stage of the journey.

The Carthusian proceeds to explain how we are to make this ascent of the Cloister Stair. "First comes reading as a foundation," he says, "and furnishing the materials, sends you on to meditation. Meditation inquires diligently what is to be desired, and, as it were, digging into the treasure-house, finds and points it out. But since of itself it cannot obtain it, it sends us to prayer. Prayer, lifting itself up to the Lord with all its strength, lays hold upon that much longed-for treasure, the sweetness of contemplation. Contemplation coming, rewards the labour of the

three that went before, while it inebriates the thirsty soul with the dew of celestial sweetness."<sup>1</sup>

Ordinarily, no soul can expect to find the higher activities of prayer without laboriously ascending the *Scala Claustralium* step by step. Those who desire by one stroke of the spirit's wing to reach the top-most heights, are presumptuously expecting heavenly favours which no man has the right to ask ; for we are then requiring God to make an exception for us that is made for few even of the greatest Saints.

The steps of this upward way depend one upon another in such fashion that no one can make progress who does not use them all. Nor will the use of any one of them ever cease to be needful, as long as we are *in via*. When we are *in patria*, in "our true native land," then only shall we be able to rest in the highest. "The first is for beginners," says Guigo, "the second for those who have attained some proficiency, the third for the consecrated, the fourth for the Blessed ones."<sup>2</sup> In order to maintain true Christian progress every man must make a new beginning daily, renewing and constantly practising afresh all that he has ever done for God.

Therefore, over and over again must the stair of the cloister be trodden, for whatever high degree the soul has reached, it yet needs daily that help which each step of the upward journey affords.

"Reading, therefore, without meditation is arid, while meditation without reading runs into error ;

<sup>1</sup> Guigo, *Scala Claustralium*, cap. x. In St. Bernard (Mabillon, Paris, 1839). Tom. v, col. 655-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

prayer without meditation is lukewarm, but meditation without prayer is unfruitful ; prayer with devotion obtains contemplation, and the obtaining of contemplation without prayer is rare or miraculous.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas fixes upon this same truth, and explains to us that reading lifts the mind up to God ; meditation enables us to preserve and digest what we read, and through the means of affective prayer the soul is inflamed with the love that enables it to enjoy God, lifts it out of itself, gives it a sense of calm and peace in the things it is considering, fills it with rapturous wonder at the truths that fall beneath its ken, and inundates it with the spiritual sweetness of the divine Presence. And this work of love within the soul is Contemplation.<sup>2</sup>

## VI. *Of the Active Life*

By *Action* we mean external works performed with such motive and spirit as to constitute them exercises of the virtues, especially of the virtue of mercy whereby we contribute to the corporal or spiritual relief of our neighbour.

The *Active Life* is that which is lived by such communities as are instituted primarily for external works of charity. The purest form of the Active community that has existed in the Church is that of the Military Religious Orders of the Middle Ages, which devoted themselves to the protection of the holy places in Palestine from profanation, and to the care of pilgrims. In our own time communities such as the

<sup>1</sup> Guigo, *Scala Claustralium*, cap. xii, col. 657.

<sup>2</sup> See Doyle, *Principles of Religious Life*, pp. 219-20.



Sisters of Charity and Sisters of Mercy, the Christian Brothers, etc., represent the Active Life especially. Those living the Active Life, while bound by the ordinary vows of Religion, in many cases are not required to give any more time to devotion than if they were employed in merely secular engagements.

The Active Life, however, must not be thought to be wholly devoid of special exercises of Religious devotion, although the Divine Office, meditation and other like duties, are here appointed only as auxiliary to the external work of charity. The Active Religious engages in special devotions not for the sake of the life of formal prayer itself, but for the purpose of forming through such exercises, that interior character which will enable him the better to accomplish his outward activities as a worthy offering to God. With him, prayer, over and above that which is of precept to every Christian, is a means to an end, the end being union with God through serving his neighbour.

The Contemplative, we have seen, may perform many external works, but he does so only that he may the better pursue the life of prayer which is the essential end of his profession. The Active Religious, on the other hand, may perform many devotions, but he does so only that he may be the better prepared for his external works of mercy, which is the essential end of his profession. Nevertheless the Active Life, equally with the Contemplative, is designed, as every form of Religion must *essentially* be, for the acquiring of perfection, and both have equally in view the final perfection of love whereby alone complete union with God may be attained. As we have considered

before, the ultimate aim is identical, although the means that each employs to gain this end, are different.

In many respects the Active Life is a difficult form of Religion, owing to the many external duties of a distracting nature that are involved in it. It enjoys a less sheltered condition, and those who, labouring under such devotional disadvantages, are still able to attain to perfection, may be said to have accomplished a more difficult task than those who are hedged in by stricter rules and Religious enclosure.

The Active Life being particularly one of works as differentiated from formal exercises of prayer, must be pre-eminently a life of oblation, that is to say, it is to find its chief merit in the perpetual oblation to God of those active labours that are done for His glory and for the love of one's neighbour. The Active Religious must ever find Jesus Christ in those to whom he ministers, having always in his thoughts the words: "I was an hungred and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me."<sup>1</sup>

The spirit of the Active Life is expressed in the directions of St. Vincent de Paul to the founders of the Sisters of Charity: "The Sister of Charity shall have for her convent the house of the sick, for her cell the chamber of suffering, for her chapel the parish church, for her cloister the streets of the city or the wards of an hospital. Obedience shall be her

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew xxv. 35, 36.

enclosure, the fear of God her grate, and modesty her veil."<sup>1</sup>

### VII. *Of the Mixed Life*

The Mixed Life is that form of Religion that combines both Contemplation and Action. This form of the Life requires one to divide his time and energies between prayer and work, and neither of these is subsidiary to the other. Both are performed for their own sakes, and union with God is sought directly through both the life of Contemplation and the external service of one's neighbour.

Action and Contemplation are in no way opposed to each other, and they both can at the same time and by the same person be arrived at and attained to in a high and relatively perfect degree. St. Gregory the Great<sup>2</sup> interprets Ezekiel's vision of the Seraphim as showing by the figure of the hands (indicating action) and the wings (indicating the flight of contemplation), that this is possible.<sup>3</sup>

It must be borne in mind that when it is said that the Mixed Life combines both Contemplation and Action, this does not mean that certain elements are taken from the Active, and certain others from the Contemplative, Life; and are, as it were, fused together, producing as a product a third element which is the essential characteristic of the so-called

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Bougaud's *History of Saint Vincent de Paul*, Vol. i, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup> St. Gregory Mag., *Hom. in Ezech.*, Lib. i, Hom. iii, 9. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxvi, col. 809.

<sup>3</sup> St. Gregory Mag., *Moral.* Lib. xxxv, cap. ii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxvi, col. 751.

Mixed Life. The latter form of Religion in combining the Contemplative and the Active, holds them both to be of equal importance—and those professing it are bound to exercise the life of contemplation side by side with active ministries for the corporal or spiritual relief of their neighbour. “The Mixed Life includes the whole of the Perfection of the Contemplative Life, and it in no way diminishes it,” and unless in it the Contemplative Life is actually arrived at, and exercised, it is not really the Mixed Life.<sup>1</sup>

The Mixed Life is analogous to the life of the ordinary Christian, since in some real sense every baptized soul must live a life partly contemplative and partly active. The life of prayer (and all true prayer partakes of contemplation) is necessary to the right ordering of the external activities of love and mercy.

#### VIII. *Of the Comparative Excellence of Various Forms of Religion*

Authorities agree that the Contemplative is of greater excellence than the Active Life. Action is a means to an end, whereas Contemplation is an end in itself. The work of contemplation will not cease with this life, but is a part of the Beatific Life in heaven.<sup>2</sup>

A more difficult question to decide is the relative excellence of the Contemplative and the Mixed Life. The authorities devote much argument and consideration to it, and, following St. Thomas, the general

<sup>1</sup> Humphrey, *Elements of Religious Life*, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> St. Gregory Mag., *Hom. in Ezech.*, Lib. i, Hom. iii, 9. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. lxxvi, col. 809.



conclusion has been that the Mixed Life is of more excellence and dignity than the Contemplative. St. Thomas cites the example of our Lord's own life as being divided between Contemplation and Action. He teaches that those who seek to gain the illumination of the divine Presence for their own perfection, and who devote themselves to communicating it to others, have the highest vocation,<sup>1</sup> for this form of Religion offers opportunity for the exercise of a wider range of virtues. The best and the highest type of Religious is he "who stands midway between God and the people; receiving from God through contemplation, and giving to the people through action."<sup>2</sup>

The Mixed Life, as we have already seen, contains the whole of the Contemplative Life, diminishing its completeness in no measure; and it also adds to it those corporal and spiritual ministries to one's neighbour that will lead others to the love of God. Therefore, while all agree that the Contemplative is the most safe and secure for the individual, the Mixed Life does the greater honour to God, since it accomplishes a wider work for the perfection of mankind in general. Even though it may introduce larger opportunities of temptation and distraction, and so in one sense be more perilous, yet these very temptations give a wider scope for battle and victory for the divine glory, and are therefore additional opportunities for tending to that perfection to which the Religious is bound.

What has been said above applies to the relative

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, *Summa*. 2. 2, Q. 188, Art. 6.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, 3 *Sent. Dist.* 35, Q. 1, Art. 3.

merits of the different forms of Religion. A practical question for aspirants is also the relative excellence of different communities that profess the same form of life. These questions must be decided on the following principles :—

1. A community is more perfect according as the end it strives for is more excellent and extended.

2. But this is not enough. A high end and purpose must be accompanied by corresponding means for fulfilling them. A community with a lower aim combined with perfect means for accomplishing it, is of higher excellence than one with a high aim but with no adequate means for its fulfilment.<sup>1</sup>

3. A community is more perfect according as its rules and discipline are more faithfully observed and administered. The purpose may be the highest and the means the best, but unless there is progress towards the proposed end by the faithful use of the proposed means, it is of no avail.

Gautrelet observes : “ We may conclude that the strictest poverty, the most rigorous solitude, the most continual prayer, the greatest austerities, are not infallible marks of the greater perfection of an Order in comparison with others. For all these things are means. Before pronouncing on them it would be necessary to measure the degree of excellence of the end, prove the proportion that exists between the means and the end, and be assured of the manner in which the different rules are observed in the Order.

<sup>1</sup> The Abbot John gave as his reason for leaving the life of a solitary and returning to the lower aim of a cenobite, that “ it is better to seem earnest with smaller promises than careless in larger ones.”—Cassian, *Conferences*, xix, cap. iii. Migne, *P. L.*, Tom. xlix, col. 1129.

However, other things being equal, the more austere Order would be more perfect than the less ; and that in which greater poverty is practised would be more excellent than the Order in which there is less strictness ; these means naturally producing greater renunciation and consequently facilitating a more intimate union with God.

“ Finally, we may say that the most perfect of Religious Orders will be necessarily the most austere, including in the term *austerity* not only that exterior penance of the body and the senses, but still more the mortification of the passions and that interior penance which is exercised on what is most interior in man by the abnegation of his will and judgment, and the practice of humiliations.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gautrelet, *op. cit.*, Vol. i, pp. 181-2.

# APPENDIX

## I

### THE RELATION OF RELIGIOUS TO THEIR BISHOPS

BY THE REV. F. W. PULLER, S.S.J.E.

#### *In the Early Church*

IN the earliest stage of the Dedicated Life, when the ascetics, whether male or female, took vows of celibacy and lived a very severe life of abnegation, but did not retire into deserts or into monastic and cenobitic communities, "the greatest freedom," as Duchesne<sup>1</sup> says, "presided over their entry into the virginal estate. No ceremony consecrated its beginning."

Later on these dedicated persons were ranked next to the clergy and above the rest of the laity; they were given a special place of honour in the assemblies of the Church for worship, and special mention was made of them in the prayers. Receiving thus from the Church special honours and privileges, it is no subject for wonder that they came into closer relations with the Bishops, at least to this extent, that a

<sup>1</sup> *Origines du Culte Chretien*, pp. 406-7.



virgin if she was to be recognized publicly as such, had to be veiled by the Bishop or by his deputy. There was no similar ceremony for men. *Their* primitive freedom seems to have continued.

Of course the primitive ascetics were in no way exempted from the ordinary control of the Bishops. If they were lay people they shared with other lay persons the ordinary subjection of a layman to his Bishop. If they were clergymen they shared with other clergymen the subjection of a clergyman to his Bishop. But the fact of their being dedicated to the celibate and ascetic life brought them into no fresh relation to the Bishop.

I do not think that there is the least evidence that monastic communities, when they began to grow up, were in any special way subject to the Bishop. The members of them were individually subject, whether as clergymen or laymen. Probably, however, the tendency at first was not to greater subjection, but to a claim of greater freedom. St. Epiphanius seems to have thought that he was at liberty to ordain St. Jerome's brother, Paulinianus, although he held the ordination outside of his own diocese, because he did it in a monastery. He seems to imply that a monastery was an exempt place. Whether his view of the case was correct or not, it shows the tendency of the time. To me it would seem that any such claim to exemption from the Bishop's ordinary authority is to be entirely deprecated. Religious as such ought to claim no exemption, and ought also to be burdened with no disabilities. However, the tendency to claim exemption from the Bishop's ordinary authority must be emphasized, in order that we may understand aright the Fourth Canon of the Council of Chalcedon, which decreed that "the monks in every city or place

shall be subject to the Bishop." I do not think that there is the least proof that this Canon gave any authority to the Bishop to interfere in the internal arrangements of the monastic houses. It seems to me to be an assertion of his ordinary authority over the monks. Dr. Bright says that "this Canon was directed against irregular and anarchical tendencies which had shown themselves among the monks of the East, and had produced results at once scandalous and tragical during the recent Eutychian controversy." The Canon was not proposed either by the Bishops or by the monks ; it was "proposed by the Emperor in person," for the Bishops' consideration. The Emperor no doubt had in view the interests of public order, not the internal discipline of the Religious communities.

However, if the "subjection" decreed by the Chalcedonian Canon, really gave to the Bishops a jurisdiction within the monasteries, it was something perfectly new, and the arrangement made by the Canon was not accepted in the West. Neither in East or West was any *inherent* right of the Bishops to interfere in things pertaining to the Religious Life recognized. If such a right was created by the Chalcedonian Canon, which I very much doubt, it was a *new* right resting on *positive* legislation, and that positive legislation was limited in its scope to the East. Most of the Chalcedonian disciplinary legislation was limited in its scope to the East. Several of the Canons, *e.g.*, the 9th, would have had no meaning in the West.

### *In the West*

Let us turn now to the West, and begin with Gaul. St. Martin of Tours was the first great propagator of

monasticism in Gaul. St. Martin was himself a Bishop. He combined the two offices of Bishop and Abbot, so that it is not easy to discover what in his view was the exact relation of the Bishop *qua* Bishop to the monastic community. There is proof, however, that in 674 the Bishop of Tours had no authority in the basilica and monastery of St. Martin of Tours, except only the ordination of priests and deacons and the providing of chrism.<sup>1</sup> However, that was 300 years after the time of St. Martin, and does not count for much.

The next great monastic centre in Gaul was Lerins, founded about A.D. 405, by St. Honoratus. The custom at Lerins was that the monks *qua* monks should be subject to their Abbot, but that such monks as were clergymen were subject to the Bishop of Fréjus, the Diocesan, as regards their clerical ministrations. St. Leontius was Bishop of Fréjus at that time. About fifty years after the foundation of the monastery, the then Bishop of Fréjus began to claim the right to meddle with the internal concerns of the monastery. A council of the Bishops of Southern Gaul was held at Arles, in 455 or 456, a few years later than the Council of Chalcedon, and they decided that their brother-Bishop was quite wrong, and that he could only claim to control the clerical ministrations of the clerical monks. Mabillon<sup>2</sup> says : " This is that celebrated decree of Arles, which provided the model for the subsequent privileges of monasteries."

The principle which underlay the decree of Arles was also acted on in North Africa. Many of the monasteries there claimed and exercised the right to choose their own episcopal visitor. A certain Bishop,

<sup>1</sup> Mabillon, *Ann. Ben.* i, 523.    <sup>2</sup> *Ann. Ben.*, i, 18.

Liberatus, attempted to invade the freedom of one of the monasteries in his diocese. The Abbot appealed to the plenary council of the North African Church, assembled under the presidency of Boniface of Carthage, in A.D. 525. The council formulated its decision as follows, in general terms, which applied to all the North African monasteries: "All the monasteries shall be in the future, *as they always have been in the past*, altogether and in every way free from the subject condition of clerics, yielding obedience only to themselves and to God" (*sibi tantum et Deo placentia*).

Ten years afterwards this decision was confirmed by another plenary council of North Africa, assembled at Carthage under the presidency of Boniface's successor, Reparatus, in A.D. 535. The wording of the decision is most important. It will be found in Coleti, v, 931, 932. The right to ordain monastic clerics and to consecrate the monastic oratories is reserved to the diocesan Bishop; but apart from these two reserved rights, the monasteries are to enjoy "libertate plenissima." The Bishop is forbidden to make any appointment "*quamvis levissimam*" in the monasteries of his diocese, excepting only the ordination of clerics, if the monks wish to have some; "for," as the council says, "the monks ought to be in the power of their Abbots." "And when the Abbots themselves die, let their successors be elected by the judgment of the community, and let not the Bishop claim or take to himself the right of making this election."

It is very important to notice that all these decisions, whether in Gaul or Africa, were made by Bishops, and the North African Bishops were quite alive to the importance of upholding the dignity of



the episcopate, and of claiming their full rights ; but they knew that historically the monasteries had always in times past been free, and they found by experience the ill-effects of allowing the Bishops to meddle in matters which concerned the Religious life of the communities.

Dom Mabillon, after explaining the decrees of these two Carthaginian councils, says : " It seemed desirable to relate these things at length on account of the importance of the matter, because they throw light on the monastic privileges of subsequent times, which relied on the decree of the former of these two Carthaginian councils as their authority and their model. And in truth the authority of that council is of the weightiest kind ; first because it was a general council of all Africa ; and secondly because it was composed of Bishops, who were for the most part very holy persons, who had endured dire persecutions from Trasamund (the Arian King of the Vandals). We may gather from all this that at that time it was the custom in Africa, as it was also the custom which very largely prevailed throughout the East, that monasteries, in whatever diocese or province they might be founded, were in immediate subjection to him to whom their founders wished to subject them. . . . There is no safer, there is no more undoubted foundation of privilege, says the very learned Thomassinus, than the will of founders, who are free to give their possessions and themselves to whomsoever they will."<sup>1</sup>

Of course founders could not act in that way if the diocesan Bishop had an inherent right to be the visitor of the monastic bodies within his diocese. But Mabillon evidently knew of no such inherent right,

<sup>1</sup> *Ann. Ben.*, i, 44.

and " the very learned Thomassinus " was equally ignorant. I suppose that in questions of this kind it would be difficult to name any authority who would not have to give way before the authority of Mabillon.

*Conclusion from Early Custom*

It follows from all this that members of the Religious communities in a diocese are subject to the Bishop, whether as laymen or as clergymen ; their Religious profession does not exempt them from the Bishop's inherent jurisdiction, but neither does it add to that jurisdiction. If the Bishop is to acquire visitatorial jurisdiction, it must be by the free grant of the Religious, either given once for all or given each time by election. I am assuming that Convocation does not pass any Canon subjecting Religious houses to the visitatorial jurisdiction of the Bishop. Of course, if it should do so, the state of things would be altered. But I contend that, as things are, our present constitution goes on strictly Catholic lines. We are, of course, at liberty, if we like, to make a grant of visitatorial jurisdiction to the Bishop of the diocese, but we are not at liberty, as it seems to me, to recognize an inherent visitatorial jurisdiction in him.

*In the Later Middle Ages*

I have not referred to the later middle ages, because from the time of Charlemagne onwards, the whole state of things was so utterly unlike our present condition. Charlemagne welded the Church and the monastic institute and the State into one compact system, in which the coactive temporal jurisdiction of the State and the spiritual jurisdiction of the Church and the internal Religious jurisdiction of

the monastic Superiors were all combined and inextricably interlaced. According to his system the Abbots were to be subject to the Bishops, and the Bishops were to be subject to the emperor. When once the strong hand of the State had meddled with the business, it was natural that the monks should look out for some powerful protector, and such a protector they found in the growing power of the Popes. The monks now sought to obtain exemptions from the Popes, whereas in the earlier days they claimed their freedom as their own inherent right. The Popes were quite willing to intervene. Nothing could have furthered their own policy better. They gladly granted exemptions *for a consideration*. They gave as a papal favour what the monks might canonically have claimed as a right ; but the Popes reserved to the Roman see that visitatorial jurisdiction, which they were taking away from the Bishops. Ultimately, in the year 1215, Innocent III went the length of prohibiting the erection of any new Religious Order without the consent of the Pope. It is on this perfectly novel decree that the present discipline in the Roman communion rests. New Religious Orders must be approved at Rome, not because there is any inherent necessity for Religious Orders to have ecclesiastical approval, but because by a papal law of the year 1215, the old freedom was taken away. I am in no way criticizing Innocent's action. In the general muddle of Church and State and monasticism, which then prevailed, it may have been a wise law. It certainly does not bind us in England now. It was not a law in favour of the Bishops ; it was a papal law in favour of the Popes.

In the earlier ages the freedom of the monks in regard to their own Religious life and obedience com-

bined with subjection to rightful episcopal authority was not the outcome of crude and irregular methods ; it was the rightful inheritance of the monks, confirmed to them over and over again by the episcopate of the Churches of Africa and Gaul. In Ireland and Scotland things went to the other extreme, and there the Bishops were wholly subject to the Abbots. I in no way approve of that arrangement. The Galician and African way was the well-tempered mean, which secured for each side their rights.

*The Roman Rule not Binding upon Us*

To say that Religious obedience cannot be rightly paid to a Religious Superior, unless the community has been specially authorized by the Church, and unless ecclesiastical authority has been specially delegated to the Superior, appears to me to be a position fundamentally subversive of the Religious life and absolutely unhistorical. It would mean that the Religious life, when it was in its prime and in its glory, when it was subduing Europe to Christ and handing down the torch of religion and learning, was based upon a fundamental mistake, and that it was only in the thirteenth century, when the glory was waning, that any true jurisdiction was possessed by the monastic Superior. The Church does not possess Religious jurisdiction. An ecumenical council cannot create Religious jurisdiction. That can only come from the free donation of the Religious, who have themselves been called by Christ to the life of obedience. That is the core of the matter. The Church may clothe the Abbot with additional ecclesiastical powers, but his essentially Religious authority it cannot give to him, because it does not possess it. "Nemo dat quod non habet."



Suarez, in his discussions on the Religious State, is dealing with the modern Roman system, in which the Religious and the ecclesiastical authority, and in some countries the *coactive* authority of the temporal power, are very much mixed up together. Yet even Suarez distinguishes carefully the core of the matter from its adventitious clothing. He says :<sup>1</sup> " The dominative . . . power which exists in the Abbot, prior, or other immediate Superior, is, without any other proper spiritual jurisdiction, sufficient to constitute a true Religious state." On the previous page he had defined this " dominative power " thus : " By dominative power is to be understood a right which has been acquired by the Religious body and its prelates to rule the Religious and to avail themselves of their labours as they may judge fitting. This power does not belong to the keys, nor does it descend from Christ by a special donation made to His Church, but springs radically from the will of those who profess the Rule, and who give themselves to the Religious body with a promise and obligation of obedience according to Rule. This power is therefore distinct from that of the keys, and consequently is distinct from *jurisdiction* properly so called." Further on, Suarez says : " In virtue of this paternal spiritual power, derived from voluntary compact, along with accepted delivery of themselves, and confirmed by the vow of obedience, a Religious prelate possesses, apart from proper jurisdiction, power to prescribe to his subjects, to coerce them and to punish them with a moderate and regulated punishment, such as should suffice in order to the ordinary ruling of a family."

As I have already pointed out, since the year 1215 no Religious Order can exist as a Religious Order in

<sup>1</sup> Humphrey's *Digest*, i, 117.

the Roman communion unless it has been formally approved. Before that time such approval was not needed, and even since that time people may take the three vows and may unite together to form a body bound by the three vows, only they have no claim to be recognized by the Roman Church as being technically Religious, and as inheriting the special exemptions and privileges, which by positive law have been annexed to the estate of those who are recognized as being technically Religious.

Suarez<sup>1</sup> says : “ *According to the present law and usage of the [Roman] Church* there cannot be a true Religious state save in a Religious body which has been approved by the Church.” But he also says :<sup>2</sup> “ Although a special approbation of the Church is necessary in order to the Religious state, *strictly and properly so called*, yet it is not necessary for every mode of life which in some manner partakes of the nature of that state or imitates it. He who vows obedience delivers and subjects himself to another whom he thereby constitutes his Superior ; and thus obedience becomes possible. It is not necessary for this that a Superior so constituted should have power derived to him from the Church, because it is not by power of jurisdiction, but by dominative power, that he is to prescribe ; and this power he can receive privately from him who makes the vow. It is not necessary that he should have any public or authoritative approbation, for a vow of this kind is not public, but private. It is sufficient that in the exercise of prudent judgment, or with moral probability, the person selected should be considered apt and able, and such as that one may commit to him the care of one’s soul by a special obedience.”

<sup>1</sup> i, 104.    <sup>2</sup> ii, 4.

## II

THE AMERICAN CANON CONCERNING  
RELIGIOUS ORDERS

IN 1913 the General Convention of the American Church passed a Canon (No. xxii) for the recognition of Religious Communities, being the first legislation of this kind that has been enacted in the Anglican Church since before the Reformation. This Canon is as follows :—

*Of Religious Communities*

§ i. A religious community of men or of women desiring the official recognition of the Church shall submit for his approval its Rule and Constitution to the Bishop of the Diocese wherein the Mother-house of the community is situated ; and no change in the Rule or Constitution shall be made without his approval.

§ ii. In such Constitution there shall be a distinct recognition of the doctrine, discipline and worship of this Church as of supreme authority.

§ iii. No religious community shall establish itself in another Diocese without permission of the Bishop of that Diocese.

§ iv. The community may elect a Chaplain, but if he be a Priest who is not canonically resident in the Diocese, he must be licensed by the Bishop. Any Priest ministering in a chapel of a religious community shall be responsible to the Bishop of the Diocese for his ministrations in the same manner as a parochial clergyman.

§ v. In the administration of the Sacraments the Book of Common Prayer shall be used without alteration, save as it may be lawfully permitted by lawful authority.

§ *vi.* It shall be provided in the Constitution of a religious community that real estate and endowments belonging to the community shall be held in trust for the community as a body in communion with this Church.

§ *vii.* Members of a religious community who are in Holy Orders shall be subject to all canonical regulations concerning the clergy.

§ *viii.* Provision shall be made in the Constitution for the appointment of a Visitor, with the approval of the Bishop of the Diocese in which the Mother-house is situated, if the Bishop himself is unwilling to serve in such capacity. It shall be the duty of the Visitor to see that the Constitution and Rule, as approved, are duly observed, and to receive and hear appeals either from the community or from individual members thereof as to transgressions of the Rule. No full member of a community shall be dismissed therefrom without appeal to the Visitor, nor shall any be released from his or her obligations thereto without the Visitor's sanction.







776083





[illegible]

GRAHAM	LIBRARY	TRIN.	COLL.
--------	---------	-------	-------

	416-978-5851	
--	--------------	--



